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Online Study Materials on
GLOBAL INTERFAITH MOVEMENT

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TOWARDS FINDING COMMON INTERFAITH GROUND

A CAUSE FOR HOPE FINDING COMMON GROUND THROUGH DIALOGUE

We are all too familiar with war being waged around the world as a result of differences, both real and perceived. Even more troubling is the role of religion today. Complex political, social, and economic issues are frequently reduced to conflicts between faiths.

In today's interconnected world, the lives of peoples of various backgrounds and religions are increasingly overlapping. It is therefore imperative that we take hold of the richness and potential strengths that lie in our diversity. And while at times, we fight as a result of such differences, there are moments in which we can connect and come to genuinely know one another. It is through maintaining these points of connection, often through dialogue, that we are able to grow individually and better ourselves, our religious communities, and eventually the society in which we live.

As the Ambassador of Bangladesh to the U.S., I have many opportunities to encounter individuals whom formerly I never would have imagined befriending. As a Muslim, my faith compels me to understand and learn from the diversity of the world. A particularly important verse from the Qur'an reads:

"O human being! We have created you male and female, and appointed you nations and tribes, that you may come to know one another; surely the most honourable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty); surely Allah is Knowing and Aware." (Surah 49, verse 13)

The deepening of my own faith as well as my interaction with the international community have led me to actively engage in interfaith work. This is how I came to know about the Buxton Initiative, a Muslim–Christian–Jewish partnership, founded with the explicit intention to cultivate friendships across religious divides. The goal of these efforts is to create a context hospitable to communication on a variety of important levels.

This Buxton reading highlights similar initiatives that have also accepted the challenge of bringing together individuals belonging to different faiths. My efforts and the efforts of the Buxton Initiative are just two examples of various individuals and organisations that seek to bridge divides, not create them. They serve as role models whose efforts can ultimately inspire us to assert the values of our respective faiths which are beneficial to us all.

Shamsher M. Chowdhury, BB, graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Pakistan Military Academy and was commissioned to the Pakistan Army in 1969. During the War of Liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, Chowdhury was distinguished for his bravery and awarded with the Gallantry Award "Bir Bikram" (BB).

He joined the Bangladeshi Foreign Service in January 1975 where he served as Ambassador of Bangladesh to several nations, including Sri Lanka, Germany, and Vietnam. Chowdhury represented his country in international conferences in the FAO, WPF, and Non-Aligned meetings. He was also a member of the Bangladesh Delegation to several Commonwealth and SAARC Summits. Currently, Chowdhury serves as the Ambassador of Bangladesh to the U.S. and is actively engaged in efforts to promote interfaith dialogue.

The Parliament of the World's Religions, hosted in 1893 in conjunction with Chicago's World Fair, was the pre-20th century precedent for interfaith dialogue. Participants at the time were not likely to imagine the tragedies to follow in the subsequent hundred years: The Great War, World War II, Vietnam, Korea, all the African, Asian, and Middle Eastern conflicts, and today's metastasized cancer of terrorism. Yet it was intuitive to the sponsors of this Parliament that such an effort was required in order to foster peace and reconciliation 113 years ago. When this Buxton reading was written, millions in Lebanon and Israel were under threat of attack and violence continued to erupt in the Middle East.

This Parliament held more than a century ago placed special emphasis on interaction between members of the Abrahamic faiths:

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Today, the Buxton Initiative is a bridge that connects this past to our future. The Buxton Initiative began when former U.S. Ambassador J. Douglas Holladay, a Christian, and Dr. Akbar Ahmed, a Muslim diplomat and scholar, met at the National Press Club in Washington D.C., soon after September 11, 2001. Somehow, in this crucible of division, their friendship grew to become a bridge between disparate communities. The two men decided to start the Buxton Initiative in order to stake off a safe place for dialogue between leaders who might not otherwise overcome the distrust that divided their communities.

The organisation is named after Sir Thomas Buxton, a nineteenth-century reformer who combated injustice in the form of slavery. Buxton was the member of a coalition of Members of Parliament that met together across party lines, abolishing the slave trade and eventually slavery itself in the British Empire.

Today the Buxton Initiative hosts periodic luncheons and dinners to promote difficult discussions among international leaders as well as local young professionals, facilitating the growth of relationships and understanding. In the tradition of Thomas Buxton, its website will soon host an interfaith dialogue database, a valuable tool to unify groups and individuals that share a common end.

The mission of the Buxton Initiative is to establish a safe table supported by friendship and trust where candid dialogue leads people of various faith traditions to find ways to live with differences. This Buxton Reading is a snapshot of the efforts that are taking place on every level, drawing attention to successful models and looking forward to future gains.

PRINCES, PRIESTS, PROPHETS AND KINGS

The Success of Interfaith Dialogues

Introduction

"O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but God; That we associate no partners with Him; That we erect not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than God."

"Make every effort to live in peace with all men."

Conflict between followers of different faiths is not an isolated modern phenomenon. While conflict sometimes booms within the halls of history, calls for peace and periods of beneficial co-existence are

the norm rather than the exception. The central religious texts for all three Abrahamic faiths traditions assert the realization that while differences with outside communities are foreseable, peace is attainable and even essential. Contemporary followers of these faiths can therefore trace their underlying desires for mutual understanding to their own faith traditions. The above revelation, excerpted from the Qur'an, is especially insightful. It appeals to the adherents of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, referred to here as the "People of the Book." Furthermore, it recognises that peace is possible only when "common terms" are stressed. Implicit in the revelation is the understanding that the most obvious common term between all three faiths is reverence to one God above all others.

In our times, the allure of peace appears to be fading beneath the convenience of categories and the alarming force of polarization. In light of current societal trends, these ancient directives seem harder than ever to realize. In his book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Pope John Paul II describes this contemporary dilemma and also hints at a possible solution.

Modern civilization, despite undisputed successes in many fields, has also made many mistakes and given rise to many abuses with regard to man, exploiting him in various ways. It is a civilization that constantly equips itself with power structures and structures of oppression, both political and cultural (especially through the media), in order to impose similar mistakes and abuses on all humanity... Man is set free through love, because love is the source *par excellence* of all that is good.

This Buxton Reading is being written at a time when Hezbollah is repeatedly firing rockets into Northern Israel, and scores of Israelis are hiding in underground bomb shelters; when Lebanon is being decimated by unending attacks from the Israeli military, and hundreds of innocent civilians are being killed. The current exodus of foreigners from Lebanon is the biggest since the dawn of World War II.

The heart could so easily sink and fall back into expositions akin to Dr. Hedley Bull's *Anarchical Societ*y, which attempts to explain current events purely through the relationship between states and power. In a similar manner, all focus could be put on the dangers of non-state actors operating from behind the borders of one state to attack another as seen in international law and the United Nations Charter. But there *is* hope! Across the globe, from the halls of nation-states to grass roots movements, people are engaging in dialogues that cross the great

ideological divides of our time. Just months ago, in June of 2006, some twenty-five Nobel Prize winners of peace, economics, literature, physiology and medicine, physics, and chemistry attended the "Conference of Nobel Laureates, Petra II: A World in Danger." The two-day peace conference, convened by Jordan's King Abdullah II and Elie Wiesel, a Nobel Peace Prize winner and Jewish Holocaust survivor, was held in the ancient city of Petra. Its purpose was to find a peaceful solution to the long-standing troubles between Israelis and Palestinians.

Above and beyond this assembly of Nobel Laureates, thousands of groups are coming together and using dialogue as a medium to quell anticipated violence and further empathy. The importance of interfaith dialogue to global peace is highlighted by Renee Garfinkel, who issued a special report for the United States Institute of Peace on the issue:

Religion has and will continue to be a powerful contributing factor in violent conflict... Interfaith dialogue brings people of different religious faiths together for conversations. These conversations form and possess a variety of goals and formats... interfaith dialogue provided a way to serve peaceful goals within the context of religious faith. Interfaith dialogue has the power of religious traditions and provides the inspiration, guidance, and validation necessary for populations to stop violent means of conflict resolution. Such dialogues have become an increasingly important tool for those who seek peace worldwide.

The following is a series of brief descriptions of successful interfaith dialogues. We hope that they not only demonstrate the success of such interactions in the past and present but that furthering awareness of them will generate momentum into the future.

I. A Prince's View

Since the time of Henry VIII, England's monarch has also been the head of the Church of England. Prince Charles, the heir apparent to the throne, has already showed signs of diverging from the crown's traditional approach to the role of Church Head. The Crown Prince's distinct stance is most apparent in the statements he has made embracing the understanding of different faiths. Recently, he discussed his views in a piece he contributed to the "Essays on the Alliance of Civilizations" series. The essay series comes out of a United Nations Initiative proposed by the Prime Ministers of Turkey and Spain, with a mandate from Secretary-General Kofi Annan to "bridge divides and overcome prejudice... which potentially threaten world peace."

Prince Charles' essay, "Religion—The Ties That Bind," is a direct challenge to Samuel Huntington's premise encapsulated in The Clash of Civilizations. Rather than anticipating conflict between monolithic masses, the Prince of Wales considers humans as individuals and shows how civilizations of free-thinkers can pave the way to resolution rather than conflict.

As a personal example, Prince Charles expresses the depth of his own emotions upon learning that the IRA had assassinated his greatuncle, Lord Mountbatten. After describing his initial outrage and obvious desire for revenge, he writes, "I remember how it suddenly dawned on me that thoughts of vengeance and hatred would merely prolong the terrible law of cause and effect and continue an unbroken cycle of violence." Prince Charles goes on to highlight the universal truths shared by major world faiths in the hopes that commonalities may prove to be more compelling than differences. Prince Charles' essay is accompanied by several others that come together in *Essays on the Alliance of Civilizations* to form a kind of written colloquium. Contributors also include the Dalai Lama and several UN officials. The diversity of writers is encouraging as is the hope with which each writer looks forward.

II. The Nation-State at Work: Department of State and Institute of Peace of the United States Government

The Department of State Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, charged with building trust internationally, has recently established the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). The USIP is an independent, non-partisan, national institution funded by Congress to educate U.S. Foreign Service workers about specific religious beliefs and the importance of religion in foreign cultures. Specifically, it aims to prevent violent international conflicts that often occur in regions undergoing post-conflict instability and democratic transformation. To this end, the Institute seeks to empower others with knowledge, skills, resources and to directly participate in peace-building efforts around the globe. Alongside its educational programmes, the USIP facilitates cross-cultural understanding *via* interfaith dialogue. Three programmes highlight the success of the USIP's efforts: The Alexandria Process, the Tolerance Project, and Religious Voices of Reconciliation.

In January 2002, several prominent religious figures, including the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Dean of El-Azhar Seminary, met in Alexandria, Egypt in hopes of forming a new coalition of religious leadership. The Archbishop of Canterbury initiated the meeting and

was funded in part by the USIP. The final product of the meeting became known as the Alexandria Agreement, a statement signed by each of the religious leaders calling for their practitioners to cease any violent activities. The event made headlines all over the Arab world, not only for the public statement that came out of the gathering but also for its implicit show of solidarity between groups.

Months after the Alexandria Process, Jewish students in Hebron posted anti-Muslim drawings, provoking an angry response from local Imams in the area. The Mufti of Hebron called on the Israeli Prime Minister to disavow the schoolboys' drawings in an effort to avert violence. Tensions continued to mount, and the Prime Minister's public statement did little to quell hostilities.

Then something unusual happened. Due to personal relationships formed in the Alexandria process, the Chief Rabbi of Israel and the local Mufti were able to meet in a crucial gesture of friendship. In their interaction, the Rabbi denounced the actions of the Jewish students and personally assured the Mufti that their actions were not in accordance with Judaism and constituted a grave sin. This personal statement coming from a religious figure proved to have a more meaningful effect than did the earlier political statements of the Prime Minister. As a direct result of this display of mutual respect, no inflammatory words, no inciting sermons, and no violence ensued. The USIP has likewise provided financial support to another effort, the Tolerance Project. To date the Tolerance Project has been implemented in three prominent cities: Berlin, Sarajevo, and Jerusalem. The Tolerance Project distributes handbooks in religious schools on interfaith tolerance and facilitates dialogue between various persons including religious practitioners, academicians, and grassroots activists. It also hosts academic conferences on tolerance whose proceedings are published in multiple languages.

The Inter-religious Coordinating Council in Jerusalem runs another USIP-sponsored programme called Religious Voice of Reconciliation, which helps people transition from dialogue to relationship. The Council brings together leaders of Muslim and Jewish congregations to discuss personal, communal, and societal issues. The group builds on these conversations by taking action in the community, often lecturing in schools and speaking to other groups beyond their local congregations.

In one instance of unity that emerged from the process, "when the brother of one Imam passed away, all the rabbis who were part of the dialogue served the mourning family." This programme is another

example of the successful relationship-building through dialogue that is occurring in spite of challenges to peace.

III. Interfaith Dia logue Initiated by the Mosque: The ADAMS Center

The All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) is among the leading religious organisations in promoting interfaith dialogue. It is one of the largest Muslim organisations in the D.C. metro area and in the United States. In addition to interfaith work, ADAMS is involved in government relations, social services, and community services. ADAMS hosts the second-largest Cub Scout, Boy Scout, and Girl Scout programme in the D.C. area. On April 20, 2006, the Buxton Initiative held an event with Imam Magid of ADAMS titled, "Reflections of a Muslim Cleric Seeking to Build Bridges." During his opening lecture, the Imam recounted his experiences in post-9/11 D.C. that seemed to carry universal application. He specifically remembered one local resident who was once opposed to having a mosque in the neighbourhood. However, after observing the comings and goings of the ADAMS Boy Scout troop, the resident became much more comfortable about having the mosque nearby. In order for the resident to overcome his own presuppositions towards mosques in general, it was important for him to actually observe an individual mosque and its surrounding community.

The efforts of ADAMS are not limited to the Muslim community but extend to other religious communities in the region and abroad. Among its many initiatives to foster peace and reconciliation, ADAMS reaches out to the Jewish and Christian communities in their local area. Through such gestures, a mosque-synagogue-church dialogue saw its genesis and grew to establish a foundation of friendship between the three communities. During the challenging days after 9/11, the Christian and Jewish friends of ADAMS protected the Center's mosque from attacks and violence. Later, when churches in Pakistan were torched in acts of hostility, ADAMS raised $50,000 for their rebuilding.

The All Dulles Area Muslim Society is a paragon of what can be done by a community of well-intentioned individuals who have the courage to reach out and foster peace. Its success stories engender hope and promise for interfaith dialogue in the United States and the broader international community.

IV. Success in Dialogue and Action at the Local Level: The Interfaith Youth Core

Thousands of Non-Governmental Organisations are likewise fostering peace and reconciliation through dialogue. Some of these

groups are putting special emphasis on translating discussion and friendships into organised action. An example of such a group is the Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC), located at Chicago, Illinois.

The IFYC operates on several integrated principles: encounter, interfaith, identity, pluralist civil society, assets-based theory of youth development, religion, service, and religious discourse. The IFYC contacts 14–25-year-olds from different religious communities in Chicago to meet for discussions and service opportunities. Youth are encouraged to sort through shared values such as hospitality, service, pluralism, and peace, and then to describe how these are expressed in their respective religious tradition. They later re-express these values actively through service projects that vary from tutoring refugee children to leading neighbourhood clean-ups.

The Executive Director, Eboo Patel, describes his varied sources of inspiration:

My experience is an experience of pluralism. My sources are diverse... Now my main source is Islam, but I've been deeply influenced by Gandhi. I've been deeply influenced by King. I've been deeply influenced by Dorothy Day. So why not try to bring all of that to the table?

Similarly, the success of the IFYC is related to its diversified approach. Chicago Outreach organises meetings with leaders of faith communities in their place of worship. Education workshops conducted by their group, Good Neighbours in Service, introduce youth groups in disparate faith communities to a shared-values/service model. The Chicago Outreach group also sponsors Interfaith Youth Service Days. Organised twice annually, these events bring together hundreds of young people from divergent religious traditions to participate in community service projects such as constructing homes in poverty-stricken areas.

The IFYC organises faith-based partnerships that allow two or more faith-based groups to interact monthly or quarterly for purposes of education and community service. Such partnerships exist in Chicago at Jewish High School, Loyola Catholic Academy and the Muslim Education Center. The IFYC also conducts training programmes that teach college and seminary students the skills necessary to conduct interfaith programmes. One such programme is the Chicago Youth Council, a group of high school students of various faiths who meet on a weekly basis to learn leadership skills in interfaith work.

The unique approach of the IFYC coupled with the enthusiastic personality of its Executive Director has produced an NGO which is

vibrant, new, and successful. The Interfaith Youth Core gives hope and promise to the future of interfaith dialogue.

Conclusion

Martin Luther King once stated:

We have inherited a large house, a great "world house" in which we have to live together—black and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Muslim and Hindu—a family separated in ideas, culture, and interest, who, because we can never again live apart, we must somehow learn to live with each other in peace.

While emphasis is often put on our differences, interfaith dialogue seeks to address them and move forward. This Buxton Reading has attempted to show different scenes from a tapestry of interfaith dialogues that are changing society for the better. Interfaith dialogue is just one of the many ways in which people belonging to different faiths learn to work together to improve society. As is demonstrated through the stories of various individuals and organisations, peace is an objective that we must all work for and towards. It is not a way to negate issues of justice, nor is it an attempt to ignore problems that do exist.

Interfaith dialogue is simply a way of fostering a relationship strong enough to address these issues in an effort to coexist. To add further momentum to this movement, the Buxton Initiative has begun to gather a listing of interfaith groups to be made available on its website, www.buxtoninitiative.org. For every group mentioned in here are thousands that are unknown even within their respective communities. The database will be a helpful tool to generate awareness of working groups and to link individuals who are seeking dialogue. In the end, it is hoped that the database will encourage and inspire others to try to use dialogue as an agent of change.

SOME GUIDELINES FOR INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

From the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington

The purpose of interfaith dialogue is to deepen our understanding, increase our appreciation, and heighten our respect for the religions with whom we are dialoguing—their teachings, practices, and institutions. In the words of the philosopher Martin Buber, it is to engage the other religion sensitively as a "Thou," not insensitively as an "it." Muslim scholar Sulayman Nyang says, "Good dialogue is not dilution; it is dilation."

In other words, good dialogue does not water down; it opens our eyes wider to see and understand more. In addition, it most often will result in deepening the original faith of every participant, and may often lead to joint actions that improve the world we share. Sometimes, dialogue and actions in the world will flow together.

It's an excellent idea to spend some time at the very beginning talking about the kinds of conversations that have led people to significant growth, about what makes dialogue different, and about what the dialoguers hope to get from these times together. Write the group's discoveries down on a chart pad, and then hold them high as guiding examples of what the group seeks to do. It may also be helpful to read and discuss this set of guidelines together before beginning the dialogue. The dialoguing representatives must, then, truly come to learn *about* each other's religion and *from* each other's religion as embodying some vital sacred truths. As human beings, each participant must accept that she or he does not possess total and complete knowledge of God, or of the Sacred dimension for non-theistic traditions, and that persons of other traditions may have valid knowledge and experiences of God or the Sacred from which he or she can learn.

At some time or other in the stories of faith, the Jewish prophets and rabbis, or Jesus, or Muhammad, or the Buddha pointed to someone outside of their group as an example to follow. If they could, surely we can, too. Some approach this with a helpful perspective: that no person or group is mistaken enough to be 100 percent wrong 100 percent of the time.

Dialogue participants are encouraged from the outset to look for shared values and perspectives. They will find some values and perspectives they share fully, others that overlap quite a lot, and some only a little. Use all of these to build and strengthen the relationships among the dialoguers, and come back to them whenever necessary.

They will also find values and perspectives that differ—or seem to differ—sometimes starkly so. When the relationships are strong, these will be the areas of dialogue that often will generate the most growth and deepening. Some differences will call upon participants for strong commitment and persistence, and for remembering shared goals.

It is most helpful to remember that some religions define themselves mostly by doctrines, teachings, and beliefs, while others define themselves mostly by communal or individual spiritual practices, and still others by action in the world.

It is vital to remember that only a Jew can define what Jewish and Judaism is, only a Buddhist what Buddhist and Buddhism is, and so on for each religion. Each participant gets to define their own religion and tradition, and to define themselves personally in relationship to their religion. Participants may want the help of their religious leaders in this work of defining, explaining and clarifying their own tradition.

So also, let the clear expectation be that each participant is only expected to speak for herself or himself—not for all other members of her or his faith tradition, not for long-dead members of the tradition, not for a whole religious community, not for the whole historical movement—only for one's self and one's own appropriation of the faith. For dialogue to succeed, all participants must feel safe from attack, so all must agree not to attack the other religion—its beliefs, perspectives, or practices—or the other participants. Well-formed questions truly seeking to understand what the other person is saying or believing are appropriate. But this can also be a tricky distinction—what is "a well-formed question" and what is an attack? It's good to talk about the distinction more. It's also good to remember that the intention is usually more important than actual words used, and most offenses in words are not intended. Assume the best intentions.

Proselytising—trying to convert the other person to one's own religion— is often experienced as an attack. Dialogue time is not the time for trying to pressure or even to persuade in order to convert. If that is a part of one's religion, it can be acknowledged and accepted, but it needs to be saved for a different time and place.

Knowing first-hand that every religion has its scoundrels as well as its saints, dialoguers need to compare their religion's saints only with the dialogue partners' saints, not with their scoundrels; compare their religion's successes with the other religions' successes, not with failures. When it comes to our religious communities, all traditions have sometimes lived up to their ideals, and all have sometimes failed to do so. It is important for each person to suspend their assumptions about the other religion and not to assume ahead of time where they will find agreements *or* disagreements.

It is also important for each participant to be at least minimally self-critical of their own practice and their own religious tradition, acknowledging when practices have not lived up to ideals, and when their tradition also has fallen short.

The process of dialogue tends to begin most fruitfully by dealing with subjects on which there is significant commonality. An example would be exploring each other's shared or similar stories and sacred

writings, as well as their shared or similar interpretations of those stories and writings, as well as shared or similar spiritual or ritual practices. This kind of sharing helps build both knowledge of the other and mutual trust.

The range of subjects that can be explored in dialogue is vast. The timing of when to approach some subjects is key. Some subjects involve fundamental differences that at first may automatically bring on deep emotional reactions. Examples would be topics like "Has the Messiah come?" or "Solutions in the Middle East." Topics like these are best left to a time when the dialogue group's relationships are much stronger.

In an excellent interfaith dialogue, each participant eventually needs to attempt to experience the dialogue partners' religions from within. A religion is not merely intellectual ideas, something of the head, though it includes that. It is also full of feeling, full of spirit, full of heart, a whole person matter. It has both individual and communal dimensions. Such an experiencing "from within" may be a long time in coming. Joining each other as respectful, curious observers in the other's worship, meditations, or prayers can be especially helpful in trying to gain this experience from within.

ENJOY THE PROCESS AND THE RICH LEARNING THAT WILL COME FROM IT!

The Buxton Initiative

Vision

To foster reconciliation among people from different faiths and worldviews

Mission

To establish a safe table supported by friendship and trust where candid dialogue and understanding among people from different faith traditions and life experiences can find ways to live with differences

Staff

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RENEE GARFINKEL

WHAT WORKS? EVALUATING INTERFAITH DIALOGUE PROGRAMMES

Summary

- Religion has been, and will continue to be, a powerful contributing factor in violent conflict. It is therefore essential to include religion and religious actors in diplomatic efforts.

- Interfaith dialogue brings people of different religious faiths together for conversations. These conversations can take an array of forms and possess a variety of goals and formats. They can also take place at various social levels, and target different types of participants, including elites, mid-level professionals and grassroots activists.
- Interfaith dialogue programmes may resemble secular peace-building programmes in some ways. In other ways, though, religious content and spiritual culture are infused throughout the programmes, distinguishing them from their secular counterparts.
- Evaluation requires that a programme develop a clear statement of its goals, methods, and outcomes. Making these explicit at the outset helps sharpen thinking by providing an explicit yardstick by which to measure a programme's success.
- Over time, the knowledge accumulated through these types of evaluation will expand our understanding of the actual and potential roles of religious dialogue in international peace-making.
- At the individual programme level, evaluation is concerned with three components: context, the factors in the general environment that may influence programme implementation and outcome; implementation, the core of the programme's activities; and outcome, the effect of the programme on the participants, the local community, and the broader community.
- Proposing a relationship between a particular intervention or programme and a desired outcome assumes a theory of change. A logic model, which links outcomes (both short- and long-term) with programme activities and processes, is one way to clarify the theoretical assumptions behind a particular programme design so that it can be shared with all stakeholders as well as with the evaluator.
- Evaluation must be an integral part of programme planning from the beginning and should be an ongoing process throughout the life of the project, providing feedback to programme managers and staff that enable them to improve their ongoing work. Because change happens over time, it is important to evaluate the programme beyond the completion of the project.
- Evaluation must include, but not be limited to, personal, face-to-face interviews with programme participants. Other outcome measures might include the number and type of participants,

programme spin-offs, and post-programme meetings, as well as the amount of media activity and ultimately, of course, a demonstrable reduction in violence.

INTRODUCTION: WHY EVALUATE INTERFAITH DIALOGUE PROGRAMMES?

Whether in its own right or as a proxy for political battles, religion has long contributed to violent conflict around the world. But only recently has interfaith dialogue provided a way to serve peaceful goals within the context of religious faith. Interfaith dialogue can unlock the power of religious traditions and provide the inspiration, guidance, and validation necessary for populations to move toward non-violent means of conflict resolution. Such dialogues have become an increasingly important tool for those who seek to end violent conflict worldwide.

Through interfaith dialogue, each faith group can make its unique contribution to the common cause of creative co-existence. But this is far easier said than done, and to do it well, interfaith dialogue programmes must be evaluated so that lessons, good and bad, can be learned for future applications.

A politician interviewed for this report explained, "There's no guarantee that including religion in diplomatic efforts will work. What is guaranteed is that without it, diplomatic efforts have no chance of working. Religion is here to stay; ignoring it won't make it disappear."

Formal intervention in areas of conflict by interfaith groups has taken place in contemporary times since 1965 at least, when the Appeal to Conscience Foundation was founded by Arthur Schneier and a group of high-level clergy representing Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths. (Formal interventions are those planned and designed as an intervention, in comparison to informal interventions that might occur, for example, when a friendship that has developed between people of different faiths turns out to be helpful in resolving conflict.) The primary approach of the Foundation is to reach out as a neutral third party to religious leaders in areas of conflict and thereby facilitate interfaith communication.

There are many other approaches to interfaith dialogue and peace-building, but so far there has been very little research on their effectiveness. This is unfortunate, because those who design and implement interfaith programmes need feedback to determine how to maximize their efforts and resources.

Given the range of approaches and techniques currently practiced and the wide variety of geographic, political, and social contexts in which they take place, it is increasingly important to develop methodologies to evaluate what works.

What Is Interfaith Dialogue?

At its most basic level, interfaith dialogue involves people of different religious faiths coming together to have a conversation. "Conversation" in this sense has an expansive definition, and is not limited to verbal exchange alone. In his seminal work, *Habits of the Heart*, sociologist Robert Bellah placed conversation at the very heart of civilization, defining cultures as "dramatic conversations about things that matter to their participants."

The notion of interfaith dialogue encompasses many different types of conversations, settings, goals, and formats. But it is not an all-encompassing concept: interfaith dialogue is not intended to be a debate. It is aimed at mutual understanding, not competing; at mutual problem solving, not proselytizing. In his introduction to *Interfaith Dialogue and Peace-building*, David Smock lists a variety of ways interfaith dialogue has been organised and targeted:

- High-level religious leaders (elites) have convened to speak collectively as advocates for peace;
- Elite interfaith bodies have engaged in conflict mediation between combatants;
- Grassroots participants have come together across religious divisions to promote cross-community interaction and to develop participants into agents of reconciliation;
- Theological and scriptural similarities among hostile religious groups have been highlighted to mitigate the hostility engendered by theological differences;
- Dialogue during conflict has been organised as a step toward ending the conflict or, in the post-conflict period, as a step toward reconciliation;
- Conflict resolution training for an inter-religious group has served as a vehicle for interfaith dialogue.

Some writers note, however, that even this expansive definition of "dialogue" or "conversation" is too narrow if confined to the merely verbal. They argue that demonstrable deeds of reconciliation are usually much more effective than engaging in conversation. But these deeds

may also be classified under the rubric of interfaith dialogue, in the broadest of senses, because they share one underlying feature: reverence, the shared devotion to high ideals. Reverence enables participants from different faith traditions to jointly affirm transcendent ideals such as honour, justice, compassion, forgiveness, and freedom.

One way of categorising programmes is along the dimension of the participants' occupations: *Elites* are people in top-level positions in politics, religion, academia, and other fields who have the potential to influence widely the group's ideas, practices, and values. *Mid-level* people whose occupations are thought to have influence over smaller groups of people, in a more personal way. Mid-level programmes might be aimed at teachers, for example, or local clergy. *Grassroots* participants or activists are individual citizens. Their experience is more intimate, having an impact on their families, friends, customers, and others with whom they have personal relationships.

CASE STUDIES: BRIEF EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE PROGRAMMES.

A PROGRAMME FOR ELITES: THE ALEXANDRIA AGREEMENT

In January 2002, top religious leaders, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, the dean of the el-Azhar seminary in Cairo, and a chief rabbi of Israel, met in Alexandria, Egypt and laid the foundation for a new coalition of moderate religious leadership. (The Institute has been a major financial supporter of the Alexandria process.)

Peace, of course, has yet to come to the region, but the interfaith effort succeeded in developing high-level relationships that continue to yield positive results. In one case, for example, violence was averted because of a relationship that developed during the Alexandria process between a Hebron Muslim leader and the well-known Israeli Rabbi Michael Melchior.

Local anger, never far below the surface in Hebron, was aroused when Jewish schoolboys posted anti-Muslim drawings around a neighborhood. Local Imams organised in response to the provocation and were preparing inflammatory sermons for Friday services. However, because of a personal relationship developed through the Alexandria process, the Mufti of Hebron called Melchior to try and prevent the violence. Melchior saw an impending crisis, and took his concerns straight to the top of the political structure. In response, the Israeli Prime Minister publicly disavowed the schoolboys' actions. But because

he was secular and political, he was not trusted, and preparations in Hebron continued unabated. So Melchior contacted Israeli Chief Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron who traveled to Hebron—an important gesture of honour—and met with the Mufti. Bakshi-Doron personally assured the Mufti that not only were the boys' actions not in accordance with Judaism, but the disrespect they displayed constituted a particular category of sin, a shameful act (*chilul hashem*). This action and explanation satisfied the Mufti, and for that moment, at least, the anger abated and no violence ensued. Thus, even if interfaith dialogue does not lead directly to peace, it can often have positive effects.

A MULTILEVEL PROGRAMME—THE TOLERANCE PROJECT

The Tolerance Project is designed to identify and explore the resources for tolerance and religious pluralism intrinsic in the three Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, with a particular emphasis on the relevance of these resources to educational practice. Its programmes aim to reach out equally to religious academicians, practitioners such as programme managers and teachers, and local grassroots activists.

The project, which has received financial support from the Institute, is implemented in three sites: Berlin, Sarajevo, and Jerusalem, with adaptations to fit each area's specific context (a Christian Orthodox/Islamic emphasis in Sarajevo, for example). Each programme involves teacher training and the distribution in religious schools of handbooks on interfaith tolerance.

In addition to applied educational approaches, the Tolerance Project has held academic conferences on the subject of religion and tolerance, and has published conference proceedings in several languages. The project also conducts an international summer school programme, which brings together people from as many as 22 countries, ranging from organisation professionals to college students.

There are more aspects to interfaith dialogue and understanding, however, than simple interfaith mingling. True tolerance is contingent not only upon gaining a more sophisticated view of other groups, but also of gaining a similarly complex view of one's own. Experts have come to appreciate how meaningful it can be to meet members of one's own group who hold different orientations, and have begun to incorporate such experiences into their tolerance-building programmes.

MID-LEVEL PROGRAMME FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS: RELIGIOUS VOICES OF RECONCILIATION

A programme run by the Inter-religious Coordinating Council in Israel has a built-in evaluation component. It brings together local religious leaders, all of whom head congregations. The first group of rabbis and Muslim leaders to participate in the programme met for intensive dialogue led by a psychologist experienced in reconciliation work. Following the initial meetings, the group continued to convene each month to discuss personal, communal, and societal issues. The programme evaluator met with the group and also met with group members individually in order to maximize the opportunities to share information. The evaluator then brought the results back to the group for them to use in meeting their goals.

Since dialogue alone is not enough, the group also takes action together in their communities, for example by lecturing at one another's schools. In the process relationships are built; when the brother of one Imam passed away, all the rabbis who were in town went to visit the mourning family.

Ongoing evaluation will reveal to what extent this programme achieves its stated goals, and what else may have been achieved that was not anticipated. Evaluation will examine the impact on programme participants themselves and, beyond them, on their communities.

This programme was built on the kind of sensitivity that true coexistence requires—which involves, in addition to appreciating the particular faith groups, understanding the complex relationship between secular modernity and religious tradition. To illustrate, all of the leaders in the group are male, and all belong to respected, mainstream Orthodox congregations. For this project to have credibility in the Middle East, it had to forgo the liberal values of inclusion and diversity and not invite women or less mainstream sects.

GRASSROOTS PROGRAMME

Pastor James Movel Wuye and Imam Muhammed Nurayn Ashafa direct a multilevel programme in conflict management and peace-building in Nigeria, which has received financial support from the Institute. They are Joint National Coordinators of the Muslim/Christian Youth Dialogue Forum. Both had once participated as "youth leaders" in the violent clashes between their communities, and both had been wounded as a result. Because of this involvement, however, their programme had far more credibility in their communities than it might

otherwise have had. They continue to be respected religious figures who now lead youth in a peaceful direction.

Their most pressing concern is with school dropouts and drug addicts, who can be easily turned to violence. Working at this grassroots level involves giving young people a secure place to learn about other groups, teaching them ways in which their own religious tradition supports peaceful coexistence, training them in conflict resolution skills, and addressing their personal, practical life issues. The programme will give these at-risk youth the basic skills they need to have a better life. Leaders of other grassroots interfaith dialogue programmes made this point as well: a programme that provides something people want—for example, to learn a practical skill or trade—becomes more attractive and, in the process, more effective.

GRAND GESTURE

Grand gestures are, by their nature, singular. Their impact lies in the drama they create. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's dramatic trip to Israel was a paradigmatic example of a grand gesture, as his fame and power commanded media attention worldwide and illuminated Egyptian and Israeli efforts at reconciliation.

In Macedonia in 2002, religion academicians Paul Mojzes and Leonard Swidler organised a programme, co-sponsored by the Institute, which included many of the same elements of a grand gesture. They organised a multi-day event around interfaith scholarship, which included 40 respected foreign scholars who helped draw local attendees. But the power and visibility of the meeting was due to the grand gestures of well-known, powerful people. The President himself attended the opening and closing sessions.

The attending media were rewarded when the Archbishop of the Orthodox Church arrived wearing all his ceremonial robes, with his Muslim counterpart dressed dramatically as well, in ceremonial headdress and robe.

The interfaith gathering itself did not resolve the conflict, but it was an important step toward changing attitudes about the issues and may have helped lay the groundwork for cooperatively building peace in the future.

Specific Challenge of Interfaith Dialogue Programmes

The foundation of interfaith dialogue is the recognition that in order to achieve sustainable change in the ideas and actions of a

religiously identified community, religious actors and institutions must genuinely support that change.

Mutual tolerance is essential for conflict prevention and resolution, and interfaith programmes are designed to increase tolerance between participants through encounters with one another in an atmosphere of relative security and mutual respect. These programmes foster empathy, and help participants form real relationships and develop a more complex and sophisticated understanding of each other.

Although some peace-building projects emerging from faith-based organisations closely resemble secular peacebuiding efforts, in most cases the religious orientations of the organisations and individuals involved shape the peace-building they undertake. For example, religious mediators often make very explicit use of religious language and texts, such as prayer, when addressing conflict. This spiritual element encourages looking beyond one's personal interests toward a greater good.

Most religions are committed to working for justice and peace, and have long-standing and well-established structures or processes for doing so. They may also have religion-specific approaches to conflict resolution, such as guidelines for resolving conflict or rituals for reconciling relationships that have potential application across religious boundaries. Interfaith programmes between conflicted groups can mobilize these and other religious elements in the service of increasing mutual tolerance—a process that begins with the ability to interact without fear or aggression, and progresses, through empathy and understanding, to mutual respect.

What is Evaluation?

Since evaluation requires a clear statement of goals, methods, and outcomes, it is, in the most practical sense, a tool for learning to work better.

Programme evaluation is the mechanism by which all stakeholders in the programme come to understand what does and does not work—and why.

In this case, stakeholders represent a wide range of people, including:

- Programme staff and managers;
- Religious communities interested in peace;
- Granting agencies;

- Government officials;
- Academicians who develop theory and technique;
- The general public.

Even though there are many stakeholders, evaluation is primarily concerned with providing useful, meaningful feedback to the programme managers themselves. Evaluation drives programme development and institutional learning by providing the means to make mid-course corrections and build upon success. Useful evaluation facilitates the ongoing refinement of a programme's goals and methods, and helps adjust its methods to suit those refinements. Therefore, evaluation must be an integral part of a programme from inception, with programme management actively involved in identifying what information it needs to make good decisions and, later on, on what it needs to interpret and apply the evaluative data. Overtime, the understanding accumulated through evaluations like these will expand knowledge of the actual and potential roles of religious organisations in international peace-making.

Broadly-speaking, at the programme or project level, evaluation of interfaith peace-building is concerned with three components: context, implementation and outcome.

Context. Interfaith dialogue programmes take place in conflict areas, where politics and community dynamics play crucial roles in every aspect of the programme, from pivotal issues (such as determining the social consequences for individuals who participate in the programme) to small yet important details (for example, how do we ensure food delivery?). Context evaluation looks at what factors in the community help or hinder project goals.

Implementation. Evaluation examines what happens in a programme, and why. In other words, it addresses the heart of the programme by focusing on the programme's core activities—those undertaken to achieve its intended goals and outcomes. The challenge of implementation and evaluation is to identify the critical components or activities of a programme, both explicit and implicit, and explore their relationships as they are tied to the project's outcomes. This level of evaluation seeks to understand which aspects of the programme facilitate the desired outcomes and which ones impede them.

Outcome. Evaluation begins by asking what the programme is trying to accomplish: What impact is the project having on its participants, staff, other organisations, and the community? Since projects often

produce unanticipated outcomes, and since the goals of interfaith dialogue are particularly hard to measure (e.g., conflict prevention) in a complex environment, outcomes need to be evaluated at multiple levels of the project and at multiple points in time. The challenge is to focus not only on expected outcomes, but also on unanticipated ones.

- Multiple levels of project outcomes might include:
- Participant-focussed outcomes;
- Programme and system-level outcomes;
- Broader community outcomes.

The participant-focussed outcome asks what difference this programme made in its participants' lives. Most often, programme and system-level outcomes are what evaluators have in mind when thinking of the "success" of any programme. Broader community outcomes are both interim and long-term, and might include such "spin-off" effects as increased cooperation between faith groups on non-political tasks.

Evaluating social change implies the existence of a theory of change

When we posit a relationship between a particular intervention and a desired outcome, we have assumed a theory of change. A logic model and graphic display of the theory is one way to clarify the thinking behind a particular programme design, so that it can be shared with all stakeholders, as well as the evaluator.

A logic model includes:

- A succinct statement of the problem and what community needs or assets require intervention;
- A statement of desired results, both short- and long-term;
- A list of factors believed to influence change in this community;
- Strategies used elsewhere to achieve similar results;
- Assumptions behind how and why the strategies work.

Following the logic model, results are conceptualised on three levels: as outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

Outputs are the services delivered, such as a weekend interfaith retreat. Outcomes are the benefits to the participants (better relationships with individuals of another faith, less fear and suspicion of the other, and so on.). Impacts are effects on the larger community, like more peaceful sermons preached at worship services.

Evaluating Programmes of Conflict, Resolution and Peace-building

In 2001, Dr. Tamra Pearson-d'Estree of the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution and others outlined a conceptual framework for defining success in conflict resolution efforts. According to this framework, conflict resolution efforts have a variety of goals:

- Reaching agreement;
- Creating or restoring harmony in a relationship or locale;
- Fostering structural change to reduce those elements believed to induce or maintain conflict.

In addition, evaluation of conflict resolution programmes always face the challenge of how to link smaller "micro-changes" (in attitude or behaviour of participants) to larger "macro-changes" in the community that create peace.

Pearson-d'Estree's group proposed an inclusive framework that permits the evaluation of all outcome criteria that may apply in conflict resolution programmes. They argue that this framework can be adapted to cover all the various types of conflict resolution programmes, including dialogue, training (as intervention), trauma healing, and peace-building.

The categories in this table are based upon the type of change the programme seeks. The first, "Changes in Representation (Thinking)," encompasses the implementation of new ideas and ways of conceptualising issues, new languages, better communication, and the like. The second, "Changes in Relations," includes indications of change in those variables that engender improved relationships, such as trust, empathy, and new understandings of identity and security.

The next two categories transcend the particular moment of intervention: "Foundations for Transfer" focuses on those achievements that establish the groundwork for transferring new progress—an output such as formulating a new joint, interfaith agenda—to the larger community. The fourth category, "Foundations for Outcome/ Implementation," covers the structures that participants create or support that help them bring changed ideas and relationships into the larger culture. These include networks participants may create, new political structures, new media, educational forums, and the like.

These categories are not mutually exclusive, nor do they imply causality. The world of conflict and intervention is far too complex for simplistic models. In real life, relationships between criteria exist and interact across the four categories.

Evaluation Over Time

Because change happens over time, it is important to plan to have multiple evaluations that extend well beyond the initial intervention. Pearson-d'estrée's group suggested a grid in which evaluation takes place at three "phases of change" in order to assess three levels of impact.

The "promotion stage" is immediate and follows the intervention itself (e.g., weekend workshop). The "application stage" is short-term and occurs when the participant has had time to bring his new ideas or behaviours back to his primary community. The "sustainability" phase then examines the farther-reaching impacts, over the medium- to long-term. In other words, did these new ideas or developments remain effective and viable on their own over time?

The grid in recognises that change takes place on different levels as well as at different times. "Micro" level refers to the programme participants, "meso" level represents the participants' reference groups (such as professional organisations, extended families, and religious communities), and the "macro" level refers to large-scale social or national changes. With this terminology in mind, it is easier to enter into the evaluation process, even if the process itself remains challenging.

Recommendations

Effective evaluation of interfaith dialogue programmes depends upon identifying variables that can be measured. There are some obvious and simple measures of success, such as the number of participants attending, or the number willing to return or who refer others to the programme. There are also quantitative measures of attitude change, which rely on self-report to questionnaires. Both of these are important. But what really makes a difference is what people do following the programme that they did not do before. Behaviours of various sorts can be observed and quantified once they have been identified as target behaviours.

We therefore begin the evaluation by seeking out those at the source of the dialogue programmes—people currently working in the field. How do they make ongoing programme decisions? What methodologies do they use to assess their own progress? How do they know what works? More than 20 directors of interfaith programmes and others involved in interfaith work were interviewed either in person, by phone, or via e-mail for this report. Despite their differences, the data yielded common themes regarding the programme dimensions

to be evaluated and how that might be done. Their insights form the basis for the following recommendations:

1. Evaluation should direct the way change takes place. It is through effective evaluation that a programme articulates clear goals and objectives, describes specific steps taken in interventions, and observes and assesses its own outputs, outcomes, and impacts.
2. Specificity is a crucial key to effective evaluation. Thus, a programme goal should not be described merely as "teaching conflict resolution skills." Rather, the programme activity should describe the specific skills to be taught and the specific teaching method to be used. For example, one basic skill might be "active listening," in which the listener summarises and repeats what has been said to make sure he has understood fully what is being communicated.
3. Evaluation must be an integral part of programme planning from the beginning, and should be an ongoing process throughout the life of the project, providing feedback to programme managers and staff that enable them to adjust and improve their work in real time. Repeated evaluations are also necessary after the programme is completed to assess medium- and long-term outcomes.
4. Although the primary goal of evaluation is specific to the programme it serves and is geared toward local and changing needs, it is nevertheless helpful to begin with a list of dimensions to be evaluated. This kind of list permits the accumulation and sharing of knowledge in the field.
5. The power of face-to-face contact in the evaluation process cannot be overstated. The importance of dealing directly and personally with participants was repeatedly emphasised at both programme and evaluation levels. At the programme level, many programme directors were convinced that powerful change occurred predominantly through the process of interpersonal encounter. Getting to know individuals from the other side as fellow human beings was perceived by nearly all programme directors to be a transformative experience.
6. Similarly, when evaluation is conducted privately and personally, the participant often yields observations and comments about his experience with the programme that would not have been shared in a less intimate setting. Therefore, the evaluation of most types of interfaith programmes should include a personal

interview with both participants and staff. Ideally, the interview would combine both structured and open-ended elements. It would also include both attitudinal and behavioural indices.

7. Since programmes of interfaith dialogue are programmes of social change, media activity can serve as a crude, but broad-based measure of change in the general society. In recent years, there has been a proliferation of "mediawatch" tracking efforts that have grown increasingly sophisticated. Today, the media can be monitored for increases in articles that focus on peace or cooperation, for decreases in the number of articles that incite violence, for the language it uses in describing a particular religious group, or for virtually any other relevant criteria. The mass media play a role in setting the agenda and influencing the issues people talk about; programmes of interfaith dialogue exist in that environment. It is an important contextual factor.

   Media monitoring can be supplemented by "man in the street" interviews. This additional source of data provides a check on whether the media are impacting or reflecting popular opinion; it is particularly helpful in places where freedom of the press is not guaranteed and where the population questions the media's credibility.

8. Additional means are available for evaluating programmes aimed at academic elites. As change agents within their own societies, their ideas exert influence mainly through their writing and lecturing. Therefore, one outcome measure appropriate to an interfaith dialogue programme for academics would include an assessment of participants' work products—articles, papers, and books—before and after the intervention. Does their work indicate changes in attitudes, ideas, information, or action plans?

9. Simplest measures of success include:
   a. Number of programme participants;
   b. Number of post-programme meetings;
   c. Number of programme spin-offs;
   d. If the programme is targeted to a particular audience, who the participants are, what their standing in the community is, how "senior" they are, and so on.

10. Technology—both hardware and software—can be borrowed from other fields. Examples of hardware would include the use of videotape for purposes of evaluation, training, and general

information dissemination. Software applications would include adapting evaluation approaches that have been used effectively for other programmes of social change, such as programmes for reducing gang violence in urban areas, or strategies for changing health beliefs and behaviours among certain demographic groups.

11. In addition to evaluating a programme's context and the nature of its intervention procedures, personality variables should also be evaluated. Certain character traits, behaviours, or social roles are important to programme effectiveness, such as a person's status within his or her religious community. The measurement of status or reputation is community-specific, of course. In some faith communities might be based on scholarship; in others, leadership of a large congregation; and in still others, a reputation for effective community activism.

    In discussing the traits that make for effective staffing for interfaith dialogue programmes, our interviewees focussed on attitudes they observed but could not measure, such as possessing a sense of security in one's religious identity coupled with a curiosity about others'; the ability to listen to and consider contradictory views with an open mind; integrity; a capacity for empathy, the ability to appreciate other participants' anger and pain—and, perhaps more importantly, channel it into something constructive; and a willingness to be changed personally by the encounter.
12. When evaluation becomes a more standard part of programmes, its staff and managers will begin to think more like social scientists. That is to say, they will think about goals and measurable criteria that evolve over time, and include a control group whenever possible (e.g., a waiting list control, evaluated over time before they are exposed to the programme).
13. It is important to bear in mind the power of a "grand gesture." The visual and public action of a celebrity or political figure (such President Sadat's trip to Israel) carries considerable weight, and with it the ability to transform the context of a conflict. In a similar but subtler fashion, including or consulting major religious figures in public peace-making efforts lends credibility to those efforts.

Conclusion

For purposes of evaluation, interfaith dialogue is a particular type of social change programme. Therefore, these are the steps toward meaningful evaluation:

1. Build evaluation in from the beginning, to be an integral component of programme planning.
2. Begin with a "*theory of social change*" which makes explicit the assumptions behind your project. For example, the following assumptions might underlie a programme of teacher training in interfaith dialogue: 1) teachers influence the attitudes and behaviour of their students. 2) Teachers influence by serving both as role models and as sources of information. 3) Schools are microcosms of the larger society.
3. The next step in evaluation is to specify both *short and longer-term goals* (*outcomes and impacts*). In our example, short-term goals would include the following changes in the teachers who participate in the intervention:

a. The expression of more positive ideas about the other religions;

b. The expression of more positive attitudes toward interacting peacefully with members of the other religions;

c. Increased knowledge and understanding of the other religions.

Mid-term goals for the trained teachers might be:

d. To develop a curriculum (and materials) for teaching what they have learned;

e. To become sources of interfaith dialogue programming;

f. To increase in amount and quality of interfaith activity by the teachers themselves.

A long-term programme goal might be:

g. Over time, to see that the teachers' experiences with interfaith dialogue will be reflected in an increase in positive, tolerant ideas expressed in the school community.

4. Specific evaluation approaches are part of developing strategies aimed at reaching the goals. Whenever possible, pre-testing should be done to develop a baseline for quantitative measures. Thus, before the intervention one would collect the following data:

a. Questionnaires about the attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs participants have about the other religions;

b. Information on the amount and quality of interfaith interaction teachers have in their own lives;

c. Attitudes participants have toward peaceful interaction with members of the other group.

Baseline measures would be taken on the long-term goals as well, for example, the number of incidents of hate-based activity on school grounds, the quality of school-sponsored interfaith activities (e.g., clubs, extracurricular activities), or the number of positive and negative interfaith references in student publications.

5. Short-term evaluation would assess output, i.e., was the service delivered? In this case, did the teacher-training take place as planned? Measurement would include number and type of meetings, number and type of attendees, meeting content and process.
6. Then outcome would be assessed—what was the effect of the programme on the participants? Post-testing repeats the pretesting questionnaires to note changes in relevant attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, and behaviours. This is the time for qualitative evaluation as well. Face-to-face interviews add a great deal to an understanding of how the participants experienced the programme. What was helpful? What made an impression on them? How could the training be improved for the next time: What would they want to have had more of? Less of? In what way do they think they have changed? What are they doing or planning to do differently? Open-ended face-to-face interviews can yield important feedback that would not emerge either in a group or on paper.
7. Mid-term assessment in this example is behavioural: Was a curriculum developed for teaching some aspects of what the teachers had learned? Did the trained teachers develop any type of interfaith dialogue programming? What did they do? What helped or hindered the achievement of mid-term goals?
8. The long-term goal of disseminating positive attitudes would repeat the pre-intervention assessment, looking for lowered incidence of hostility between groups (such as less graffiti, vandalism, or hate-based violence in the school), as well as increases in positive (or decreases in negative) interfaith references in school newspapers and other public communication.

When it does its job well, religion offers an alternate vision of reality. It insists that the current reality—violent conflict—is not the only one possible. Religion gives people food for their imagination, and the ability to consider another possibility. As one of our participants said, "you're a slave in Egypt, then along comes Moses and says, 'There's another way—we're going to be free!'"

Many people involved in interfaith dialogue in conflict areas around the world noted that one act of terrible violence can wipe out in a moment what takes the parties a long period of painstaking work to build. It is not unlike what happens to a village that experiences a natural disaster. The violent spasm destroys and spreads ruin quickly, but leaves some things intact. And, just as the storm passes, allowing the villagers return to rebuild, reinforce, and renew, so too do interfaith peacebuilders recommit themselves to non-violent alternatives to resolving their differences.

About the Report

Interfaith dialogue is an increasingly popular response to religious conflict and religious nationalism. While practitioners employ a variety of approaches, the underlying purpose of all interfaith dialogue projects is to enhance religious tolerance and promote peaceful coexistence. Despite the increasing popularity of interfaith dialogue, rarely are these dialogue projects subjected to rigorous efforts to evaluate their impact and effectiveness. To help address this gap, the Religion and Peace-making Initiative of the U.S. Institute of Peace commissioned a study that resulted in this publication. The project director and author of this report is Renee Garfinkel, a practicing clinical psychologist and Research Scientist at the Institute for Crisis, Disaster, and Risk Management at George Washington University. She has considerable experience in the field of project evaluation including evaluating interfaith dialogue projects. She was assisted in this project by Kerry Zymelman.

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect views of the United States Institute of Peace, which does not advocate specific policy positions.

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HANDBOOK INTERFAITH RELATIONS, DIALOGUE AND TOLERANCE

INTERFAITH RELATIONS

The 1988 Lambeth Conference commended "dialogue with people of other faiths as part of Christian discipleship and mission, with the understanding that:

(1) dialogue begins when people meet each other; (2) dialogue depends upon mutual understanding, mutual respect and mutual trust; (3) dialogue makes it possible to share in service to the community; (4) dialogue becomes a medium of authentic witness.

Lambeth further urged each Province to initiate such dialogue in partnership with other Christian Churches where possible. Towards a Theology for Interfaith Dialogue, available from Forward Movement Publications, produced in preparation for Lambeth, is a resource for dialogue.

Lambeth also produced the first Anglican Communion document on "Jews, Christians and Muslims: The Way of Dialogue", printed in The Truth Shall Make You Free: The Lambeth Conference 1988, available from Forward Movement Publications. It is recommended for study and the Provinces were asked to initiate talks wherever possible on a tripartite basis with both Jews and Muslims. In this same volume, the report of the Lambeth section on Dogmatic and Pastoral Concerns provides theological reflection on interfaith relations in general, giving a wider context to the Jewish-Christian-Muslim concerns highlighted in the study document.

At one point, responsibility for oversight of the church's interfaith relations resided in a committee appointed by the Presiding Bishop.

The Presiding Bishop's Advisory Committee on Interfaith Relations was not reconstituted during the 1997-2000 triennium. Rather, a task force composed of some members of Executive Council and some members of SCER examined the place of interfaith relations in the Episcopal Church, how those relations should be structured, and what the goals should be.

At the October, 1999, meeting of the SCER, the task force proposed that interfaith relations be lodged in the SCER; that SCER forward names to the Presiding Bishop for his consideration for an Interfaith Relations Committee of SCER; that the Committee be charged with any programmatic items, to be reported to SCER; and that the Committee's Blue Book report be included with SCER's. The SCER approved the task force's proposal unanimously.

The Episcopal Church has been a strong supporter of the Interfaith Relations component of the National Council of Churches of Christ, seconding a staff person to that office for several years. At the NCCC's 1999 plenary, members adopted unanimously a policy statement giving a theological rationale for interfaith work (copies of that policy are available from the Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations). The NCCC's Interfaith Commission maintains that, theologically, it is crucial to connect inter-religious work to Christian Unity. For that reason, and because for many years any connection between ecumenical and interfaith relations was resisted in our church, one of the first tasks of the Episcopal Interfaith Relations Committee will be to explicate clearly the theological reasons for linking interfaith relations with the search for Christian unity.

It is expected that the network of Episcopal Diocesan Ecumenical Officers (EDEO) will continue with its interest in interfaith relations, and will continue to provide the vital links with dioceses and parishes across the country.

SPECIFIC RELATIONSHIPS AND CONCERNS

Diocesan ecumenical officers and congregational leaders are increasingly aware of the need for sensitive relationships with local Jewish communities. For some this is an ongoing commitment, for others a new area of work. Guidelines for Christian-Jewish Relations, available from Forward Movement Publications, was adopted by the 1988 General Convention "to assist the members of this Church in facilitating understanding and cooperation between Christians and Jews." Episcopalians, with their strong liturgical tradition, are in a

good position to reach out to Jewish sisters and brothers in appreciation of Judaism as a living and vibrant religion.

The growing number of Muslims among us means that more Episcopalians are beginning to be sensitive to relationships with local Muslim communities. This is an emerging concern in many dioceses, made more pressing by the general need arising from international relations for more information about Islam. In 1994, a Committee on Christian-Muslim Relations was established to advise the Presiding Bishop.

Relationships with many other religious communities regularly pose questions and bring opportunities to diocesan ecumenical officers and others in the Church. Other specific relationships, like that between Christians and Buddhists, need to be better understood and nurtured.

IEI: THE INTERFAITH EDUCATION INITIATIVE

In response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, Episcopal Relief and Development approached the Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations about developing educational resources for Interfaith Dialogue. In November, 2001, the ERD Board of Directors voted to fund a programme to develop these resources and contracted the Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations to facilitate their development. The goal of this partnership is to develop resources and design curriculum to facilitate interfaith dialogue.

TEXTING TOLERANCE: COMPUTER-MEDIATED INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

As religious unrest and tension rise throughout the world, facilitating interfaith dialogue has become more important than ever. Many religious organisations have begun to include interfaith discourse into their general religious programming for members and some hold regular dialogue groups for their local population. But face-to-face events tend to focus only on the local community, excluding distant others who also seek to participate in inter-religious discourse. The Internet, therefore, is an important medium to utilise for interfaith dialogue, and can bring isolated people together to discuss issues of difference and faith. This project finds that online interfaith information is excellent for congregations to utilise because of the relatively anonymous nature of the Internet, the disappearance of proximity limitation, the ability to become close with other participants, access to a spectrum of people who practice a particular religion, and the extra time available to

ponder moderator questions and previous discussions. Using the Internet for interfaith dialogue is an important step for religious institutions and congregations. Not only are they reaching to their own members through cyberspace, but also reaching the larger population, sharing their range of religious beliefs, and participating in a global effort to improve tolerance and understanding between religious practitioners.

Introduction

Millions of people access information via the Internet each day. A good portion of these Internet users participate in chat rooms or other types of interactive communicative sessions with other individuals. However, very few religious organisations, institutions, and congregations take advantage of new media for enhancing communication between members and between groups of differing religious traditions. Through a content analysis of religious organisations, institutions, and congregations, only 13% of the 60 websites sampled included any reference or resources for interfaith dialogue (Ostrowski, 2006). A subsequent survey was given to these organisations and showed that while few included inter-religious information on their website nearly all who responded held face to face interfaith events and often even participated in interfaith sessions on a national level. So why do religious institutions and congregations refrain from utilising the Internet to promote discourse between people of differing religious traditions? How can the online medium be used effectively to enhance the interactivity and efficacy of inter-religious discourse? This paper will explore the enhancements and potential drawbacks of online interfaith dialogue and explains the ways in which religious organisations can benefit from incorporating interfaith dialogue (IFD) resources into their own presence on the World Wide Web, based upon work with the interfaith dialogue forums on Beliefnet.

Beliefnet is the largest spiritual website, begun in 2000 by Steven Waldman, a former editor (Dart and Allen, 2000) and has over 3.1 million unique monthly visitors (Beliefnet, 2006b). In 2001, Beliefnet started a series of interfaith dialogue forums as an experiment. Judging from their continued presence five years later, it can be called a successful experiment. There were six forums initially, and each had its own unique group of participants; everyday users of Beliefnet who were interested in talking about different aspects of religion with other participants. Each forum was led by a different moderator, and moderators were invited by Beliefnet to participate based upon their personal experience with interfaith dialogue in face-to-face experiences.

All had advanced academic degrees and extensive experiences facilitating dialogue between people of different religious beliefs. As the largest spiritual website, Beliefnet itself is non-denominational, and describes itself as a forum for discourse without pushing the agenda of any particular tradition. "We are a multi-faith e-community designed to help you meet your own religious and spiritual needs—in an interesting, captivating and engaging way. We are independent. We are not affiliated with a particular religion or spiritual movement" (Beliefnet, 2006a). Since Beliefnet was the first site to create a space for online interfaith dialogue, their efforts serve as an example of effective and at times an ineffective means to facilitate discussion between people of different religious traditions.

Advantages of Online Interfaith Dialogue

Significant positive benefits can arise in bringing people together for an online interfaith discussion. Steve Waldman, creator of Beliefnet says that "the anonymity of the Internet is what makes it work so well for religion... it's that you can explore religious matters in the privacy of your own home; ask questions you might be embarrassed to ask; have conversations with some anonymity; and do it anytime day or night" (Last, 2005, p. 8). Anonymity is assumed to allow users to play with identity, choosing their gender, sexual orientation, and religion; self-presenting as actors in the social experience (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In the interfaith rooms of Beliefnet, it is possible that the lack of physical symbols of religiousness, such as wearing a cross necklace, a kippah, or a headscarf, requires users to look to the words of the person before they can define them as an adherent of a particular tradition. This in itself has the potential to increase the speed with which participants can enter into different phases of interfaith dialogue. Further, online dialogue requires that participants have access to a computer instead of transportation to a face-to-face meeting, potentially allowing for the inclusion of people who might otherwise not partake in interfaith in inter-religious exchange (Oughton, 2006).

Another advantage to interfaith dialogue over simply reading a world religions book or even a survey course in religion is the one-dimensional aspect of each tradition. Interacting with someone from another denomination enhances the spectrum of each religious tradition in that they speak about their observance and practices and allows for a range of adherence beyond doctrine. "Surveys tend to oversimplify traditions, and ignore the many voices and lived experiences of the cumulative aspects of the tradition" (Berling, 2004, p. 83). It is this

spectrum of voices representing a tradition that allows for a richer sense of how a religion functions in the lives of individuals.

A benefit of the online dialogue format is that it allows instant connection to disparate people and a sense of anonymity stemming from not seeing the other person which allows honesty, openness, and the development of a common ground for discussion (Jones, 2006). Preece and Maloney-Krichmar (2003) describe common ground as an important component of group conversation and suggest that sharing the same physical arena, the ability to see and hear other participants, sharing the same temporality, being able to take turns, and the ability to review and revise messages. In text-based situations, messages must incorporate both information and emotional states and this leads to often deep relationships but ones that take much longer to develop than face-to-face associations (Walther, 1996). This level of comfort seems to also rely upon users who have less familiarity with Internet conversation. Many of these issues of common ground are based upon face to face group situations while online situations remove the visual and aural cues and are often asynchronous, though this is not necessarily detrimental to the conversation experience. In some situations, text only environments can allow for greater self-disclosure when the information is potentially embarrassing (Newell & Gregor, 1997).

Limitations of Online Interfaith Dialogue

Online interfaith dialogue does have some drawbacks that must be addressed when planning the group discussion. There seems to be an interaction difference when it is not a "live" group of people and time lapse between conversation pieces exists (Jones, 2006). In examining the interfaith forums from the Beliefnet archives, the dynamic experience of the dialogue as it occurred is absent (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). If posts feverishly appeared and were replied to about certain topics, drawing in and engaging participants in a way that other topics did not allow for, this would not be accounted for beyond recording time stamps. However, there are some benefits to the removal of immediate temporality as this allows for lengthier time for reflection and organisation of thoughts into a composition (Preece & Maloney-Krichmar, 2003). "The asynchronous or delayed capacities of these conferencing tools, for instance, allows learners some control, while increasing 'wait time' and general opportunities for reflective learning and processing of information" (Hara, Bonk, & Angeli, 2000, p.116). For interfaith dialogue in the online medium, time is then both an advantage and a drawback. It allows for greater time to ponder

information and to create new posts but also removes the dynamic nature typical of a reciprocal discussion environment.

Online addictions and virtual living are also problematic. Turkle (1995) says that as the examination of the relationship between online and face to face interaction suggests three ways in which online interactivity has the potential to skew in person experiences. First, she says that the artificial experiences may seem real. In interfaith dialogue this could indicate that a person who participates in reading interfaith dialogue exchanges and then moves to being able to discuss inter-religious issues with less of a time lag might feel that the interaction of the second resource to be more real than it really is. Second, she says that the fake may seem more real than real. This could indicate that the experiences people have with interfaith dialogue in an online setting might seem more intimate or real to them than the inter-religious discussions they could have face to face. Finally, Turkle suggests that people who have experiences online might feel that they have done more than they really have because of the intensity of the virtual nature.

At the end of the conversation some participants might feel that they have accomplished large things with respect to inter-religious discourse and understanding but the feeling will soon subside and the results can be fleeting (Jones, 2006). Further, during online discourse people are not interacting on a personal level, as they cannot see the facial expressions of the other participants and it is a distant means of communication (Oughton, 2006). Through his experience with interfaith dialogue group, Oughton asserts that in the long run, face to face is more effective than online because friendships develop and potentially grow into participation in others' lives, which includes religious ceremonies and events. The traditions become something more than a tradition discussed or read about and seen as something lived.

Another limitation of online interfaith dialogue is the potential for miscommunication. "Don't take offense. Others will be probing and asking questions and may inadvertently and unintentionally trample your 'sacred cow'" (Landau, 2006b). The issue of misreading posts or becoming offended based upon writing is a common flaw in online communication. People misread information, take statements personally when the intent was not there, as well as posters unable to adequately convey themselves in a format where nonverbal and emotional cues are absent. This lack of physical and nonverbal cues also is a limitation for online interfaith exchange, leading to difficulty in some

interpretations and allow for the potential of misreading posts and responding negatively to words when this was not the intention of the author (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). "Misunderstandings are particularly common among people who are not used to using the media because they have not had time to get used to it and to develop ways of getting around this problem" (Preece & Maloney-Krichmar, 2003, p. 12).

An additional drawback is the difficulty in controlling the direction of the dialogue because of the dispersed power of the medium. "Dialogue is about listening to others and learning from them. It is counterproductive to allow any participant to target another participant for proselytism" (Landau, 2006b). This is, however, more challenging in an online setting when the forums are open and available to those who signed upto participate and their posts remain in the public sphere for all to read and respond to. In a face to face setting, a moderator might have the ability to direct attention away from an inappropriate speaker, to ask them to allow others to talk, to directly challenge their opinions, or to ask them to leave. In the online format, at least the way that the interfaith forums on Beliefnet are constructed, the participants have the power and must self-censor.

A final limitation to online interfaith discourse is the presence of lurkers. While there may be 13 participants listed as part of the room discussion only a fraction of that number regularly post to the forum, leaving lurkers who may read but never respond. Not only does their presence perhaps limit the readiness of participants to be open about their feelings of online interfaith dialogue but methodologically it is questionable whether the lurkers, by nature of their different activity than other participants, might have different experiences or perspectives and these ideas are lost in cyberspace. While removing the face to face presence of other members in the group might allow for greater disclosure it is also possible that knowing others are listening to the conversation but not contributing might also prevent full disclosure from participants. Lurkers present a problem in online social situations where members are talking about intensely personal information.

Discussion

Considering all of this, many issues must be taken into consideration to increase participation and the effectiveness in online interfaith discourse. According to Preece and Maloney-Krichmar (2003), the role of the moderator in an online setting is to facilitate, manage, filter, serve as an expert, edit text, promote questions, and help people in

general. Therefore, it is up to the moderator to provide strong direction for the dialogue and to prevent personal attacks and tangential talk. Several additional suggestions were offered by the Beliefnet interfaith dialogue moderators. Jones (2006) suggests that effective moderators need to remain active and involved in the forums, reading and posting regularly as well as providing participants with issues to consider in their offline time. He indicated that moderators should also take a firm stance on inappropriate behaviour in the forums and have the ability to confront people about their conduct with others. Jones also suggested that moderators need to give their participants homework and ask that they learn about a wide variety of traditions, perhaps ones they had never heard of, in order to be as inclusive of religious traditions as possible. Landau reiterates many of these sentiments and further indicates that good moderators needed to keep an even balance between opinion and fact, between the participants, and to incite thought and consideration over an issue that would resonate with participants into their offline lives (Landau, 2006c). Oughton (2006) believes that a good inter-religious moderator has experience in this area and it is because of this professional background that he can give his opinion, background or viewpoints that participants might not be aware of to enhance the dialogue experience.

Unfortunately, interfaith discussion serves exclusively as an outreach for the community and interfaith dialogue remains low on the list of priorities for religious organisations. IFD typically does not recruit new believers and does not consolidate the community of believers the congregation currently has (Landau, 2006c). However, "mutual tolerance is essential for conflict prevention and resolution, and interfaith programmes are designed to increase tolerance between participants through encounters with one another in an atmosphere of relative security and mutual respect. These programmes foster empathy, and help participants from real relationships and develop a more complex and sophisticated understanding of each other" (USIP, 2004, p. 5). This is why incorporating interfaith dialogue into the resources congregations offer to their members is so crucial. Further, since more religious organisations are becoming part of cyberspace and with this more individuals rely upon the Internet to access information, it is also important that congregations utilise this medium to not only bring together adherents but also to provide them with a means to increase their tolerance of others of a different religion. Online discourse can join distant people with varied beliefs in a common space to for a common goal, to learn about each other.

"Dialogue should empower us to 'see through' the faith of others, and enable us to reexamine our assumptions of the other based on the other's definition of itself" (Takim, 2004, p. 346). Through this process, "others" become real people and it is the vicarious exposure to their experiences that people become more than representatives of their religious traditions. Online inter-religious discourse not only unites people to learn about each others' lives but also to create common understandings. Preece and Maloney-Krichmar (2003) describe an online community as a group of members with shared interests or activities, repeated active action, have the ability to access a shared set of resources, may engage in the reciprocity of information, and work within a set of shared language and understandings. It is now upto the congregations to provide the space and resources to create interfaith communities and improve the tolerance of another's religion.

Conclusions

In summary, the online format presents many benefits for the discussion of religion. Users are speaking in a relatively anonymous fashion, are exposed to a spectrum of practitioners of any given religious tradition, have the potential to feel very close to the other participants, and have the time to carefully compose and consider posts in the online forums. The main drawbacks of using the Internet for inter-religious discourse is the lack of immediate response, users who live virtually and do not take what they have learned online into their physical lives, the effects of virtual dialogue might be fleeting, the potential for miscommunication, and finally the ability of the moderators to control the room and engage lurkers in the discussion. Moderators must be experienced, active, and able to control a room of very different people using only their word to keep conversation on track and lowering the risk of inappropriate comments and tangential discourse. So, how can congregations use this information to provide interfaith dialogue resources to their members?

First, congregations could consider live chatrooms that would engage in inter-religious discourse. An appropriately experienced moderator would be selected and would control the room perhaps once a week. Participants could initially be invited to participate and eventually the ability to join the room would be open to anyone interested in interfaith dialogue. Second, if the live format is too expensive for webspace or too cumbersome for a moderator, the forum format like Beliefnet's interfaith dialogue rooms would be a strong substitute. The forum would be placed on a congregation's website and, again, a

moderator would be chosen to keep the trajectory of posts on course. The advantage of both the chatroom and the forum is that participants are interacting and discussing interfaith dialogue. Bickart and Schindler (2001) suggest that consumers who obtain information from online discussions tend to have greater interest in the product than those who obtained information from traditional web sources such as links to pages of text. While this study is based upon commercial marketing, the results nonetheless suggest that the interaction between people online does have the potential to increase interest in the topic that is being discussed and that interaction online centering on inter-religious discourse can lead to more interest in interfaith issues among participants.

If interactive forums are simply beyond the fiscal or technical reach of congregations, other methods of incorporating interfaith efforts into webspace can be undertaken. Congregations who do run interfaith events in a face-to-face setting should use the Internet to highlight the sessions and encourage people to attend as well as encourage other congregations to become more active in inter-religious discourse. Also, congregations should consider placing interfaith dialogue links on their website. Simply placing one or two resources that point to inter-religious discussion is likely to enhance the embracing nature of a congregation as well as do their part to promote peace and tolerance through religion.

"Our conceptions of spirituality and of community are undergoing profound and permanent transformations in the era of computer-mediated communication" (O'Leary, 1996, p. 782). This paper serves as a general overview of the potential to combine interfaith dialogue with a mass media and use the power of the Internet to bring together people from all over the world with very different religious beliefs for the common goals of tolerance and understanding. Beliefnet began the online interfaith forums as an experiment, but five years later the forums are still alive with talk of God, of difference, and of change. People were engaging with difficult and emotionally charged issues of faith, violence, and fear and were teaching and learning from each other about religion as a rich and lived experience. "Once opponents meet in a genuine dialogue setting, they will never return to the same positions or level of awareness that they had before. It is as if they have joined a new society. Their views and perceptions of the conflict and the enemy change, mostly because of the powerful turning point in the dialogue process when participants realize, acknowledge, and understanding their mutual fears and concerns" (Abu-Nimer, 2002, p.

15). Through this project, it is the hope that more religious congregations become less fearful of using the Internet for interfaith dialogue and embrace the medium as something other than membership recruitment. More people are online than ever before and religious organisations should recognise the power they have to point users to interfaith resources and project a united front against religious intolerance.

JESUS IN JEWISH-CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DIALOGUE

The following is a Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogue on Jesus in the form of three brief review articles on a book and a response by the book's author. The book is by a Christian, and the reviews are by a Jew, another Christian, and a Muslim. The book at the basis of this dialogue is Dermot A. Lane's *The Reality of Jesus* (Dublin: Veritas Press, 1975), 180 pp., fl.80, paper; American edition: (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 180 pp.

INTRODUCTION

There are many important potential topics of dialogue among Jews, Christians, and Muslims but one of the most key is the significance of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is central to Christianity, and is both the central bridge and barrier between Christianity and Judaism, and Christianity and Islam. Obviously, the three-way dialogue on Jesus here is only the most modest of beginnings. However, the longest of journeys must start with a first step.

The current renewal taking place in theology could be summed up in terms of a return to the origins of Christianity. This going back to the beginnings brings us into direct contact with the person of Jesus Christ.... [T]he full mystery of Jesus Christ can be broken down into two parts.... (a) the Christ-Event, and (b) the universal significance of that event for understanding life itself.... The historical side of the Christ-Event consists in the given fact that a man called Jesus of Nazareth appeared two thousand years ago within the history of Judaism. The theological significance of this fact is to be found in the confession that this Jesus of Nazareth is the definitive visitation of God to mankind in history.... The Jesus part of [the simple formula "Jesus Christ"] refers to the historical side of the Christ-Event, whereas the Christ part embraces the theological significance of this given fact. Unfortunately popular usage has tended to employ the word "Christ" as a proper name for Jesus of Nazareth whereas in primitive Christianity the word "Christ" was a title designating a specific function within the socioreligious traditions of Judaism. A more accurate way therefore

of using this formula would be to talk to Jesus who is called the Christ. This introduction by Dr. Dermot A. Lane to his book *The Reality of Jesus* is so attractive to a Muslim reader. According to the Muslim faith, the Muslim accepts the historical fact of Jesus, and so can meet with such a Christian analysis about Jesus Christ half way. A matter of "significance" can naturally tolerate different points of views, and thus Muslims would not feel so far from Christians if the gap between them has been simply identified as a difference in understanding the theological significance of a certain fact which is admitted by both, however serious this difference of understanding may be. This approach to the "mystery of Jesus" is fruitful in addressing nonChristian readers of this interesting book, especially Muslims.

The author does not like to introduce "Christology from above," a way which "tends to take for granted the divinity of Jesus Christ." He points out that another choice would be "to begin Christology from the other end, concentrating on the man Jesus giving rise to what is called a 'low Christology' which starts 'from below'." However, Dr. Lane makes it clear that one can adopt such a low Christology as a starting point "and then proceed to allow this starting point to be drawn in whatever direction one's study of the Christian sources dictates." A third possibility "would seem to present itself here that would steer a middle course between the two extremes of a closed low Christology and a rigidly high Christology." An instruction from Rome in 1964 points out that there are "'three stages of tradition' behind the gospels as we know them today. These are first of all the original words and deeds of the historical Jesus which were delivered according to 'the methods of reasoning and exposition which were in common use at the time'. The second layer... is made up of the oral proclamation by the apostles of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus" and their fuller understanding "of the words and deeds of the historical Jesus in the light of the Resurrection and Pentecostal experiences." At last the compilation of this apostolic preaching into the written form of the gospels as known today comes as a third layer. The Instruction indicated "the importance of taking into consideration the origin and composition of the gospels as well as making due use of 'the legitimate findings of recent research'" so as to ensure a full understanding of the texts.

In this way, a Muslim can see that the differences between the Muslim faith in Jesus and the Christian faith may be put as a problem of understanding and interpreting "the words and deeds of a historical Jesus," a layer which came after the historical facts. At most, it would

be a problem of misunderstanding on the side of any of the two parts, more than a problem of an intentional forging or deluding. The Qur'an refers clearly to a special place of Jesus in his relation to God, which is different from the place of any other prophet, even if the Qur'an rejects the notion that Jesus may be called "Son of God": "The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His Word that he committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him. So believe in God and His Messengers, and say not 'three'...God is only one God. Glory be to Him-that He should have a son" (4/171). According to the Qur'anic terminology "A Messenger of God" may not be an ordinary man: "Praise belongs to God... who appointed the angels to be Messengers" (35/1). A special relation between Jesus and the "Holy Spirit"-the "Spirit of the Holiness" as expressed in the Qur'an-is also mentioned: "And we gave Jesus son of Mary the clear signs, and confirmed him with the Holy Spirit" (2/253): "When God said, 'Jesus son of Mary, remember my blessing upon thee and upon thy mother, when I confirmed thee with the Holy Spirit, to speak to men in the cradle and of age; and when I taught thee the Book, the Wisdom, the Torah, the Gospel; and when thou created out of clay by my leave as the likeness of a bird and thou breathest into it and it is a bird by My leave, and thou healest the blind and the leper by My leave, and thou bringest the dead forth by My leave...'" (5/110). A Muslim scholar from India-probably a Shi'i as his name shows, Dr. Hasan Askari-has referred to such significant verses in an interesting article in this *Journal* before.

In regard to the end of Jesus' life, the Qur'an states: "When God said, 'Jesus, I will bring thee to death, and I will raise thee to Me, and I will purify thee of those who believe not. I will set thy followers above the unbelievers till the Resurrection Day"' (3/55). The other Qur'anic statement about the event may not be seen as really contradictory, if it is not interpreted literally as dealing with the historical event or the physiological death: "...and for their-the Jews'-saying, 'We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God-yet they did not slay him, neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them... and they slew him not of a certainty-no indeed; God raised him up to Him" (4/157-8).

On the other hand, through dealing with "a historical minimum in the life of Jesus," Dr. Lane states that "Jesus appears first and foremost as a man among men... He experienced fatigue, hunger, disappointment, loneliness and the usual limitations in knowledge that belong to the human condition... Jesus is seen as a Rabbi... Jesus is understood as a prophet within the long line of prophets that had

gone before him." In his introduction, the author mentions that "a low-ascending Christology reinstates the mystery of Jesus Christ in its original biblical context where it properly belongs. Within this original context biblical research would seem to suggest that the New Testament Christology itself began with the man Jesus." In this light, a Christian may see the Muslim's faith in Jesus as preliminary, but not false or intentionally depreciating. It is true that the author mentions also that "Jesus emerges as one speaking with great authority... In particular his claim to forgive sins highlights this authority... Most of all Jesus appears as one who dares to assume a unique personal closeness to... God... This allows him to address Yahweh as Abba-Father."

However, Dr. Lane indicates that the details of the arrest, the trial, and the execution "are extremely difficult to disentangle from a critical point of view." The interpretation of these events was also difficult, even for the disciples of Jesus themselves who understood the death of Jesus on the cross as a failure, and so. "The cross was indeed both a stumbling block and a sheer scandal." The author reminds us more than once that "...the mystery of Jesus Christ is a reality that took hundreds of years to fully unfold itself into a clearly defined framework."

He points out that "the formulation of [the] relationship between Jesus and the monotheistic God of Judaism took place in various stages... He is identified as the Son of Man, the Suffering Servant, the Son of God, the Lord, the Son of David, and eventually as the Word. These titles initially at least were functional... Gradually these titles, through the experience of prayer and worship, took on a confessional dimension... Eventually with the expansion of Christianity into the Hellenistic world the ontological implications of both function and confession were spelled out." Dr. Lane gives a significant clarification of the difficulties which surround the interpretation of the Christ-Event as a result of the historical environment. He says, "Because the earliest formulation of the Christ-Event in the Palestinian community was centered around Jesus as the Christ who is to come in the Parousia, it would seem that the particular question of the precise relationship between Jesus and God did not arise explicitly at this early stage." "Jesus is never called God in the Synoptics or in the early preaching of the *Acts of the Apostles*. Instead most of the evidence... is concentrated in the latter half of the first century.... [The destruction of the temple necessitated a clear break for Christianity away from the confines of Judaism with its strict Monotheism." Whenever these historical circumstances are admitted, the climate for an inter-religious dialogue becomes so convenient for all the concerned parts. As Dr. Lane puts it, "The initial foundations

in the New Testament of the universal significance of the Christ-Event that we have been exposing... were to become the object of theological reflection and heated debate in subsequent centuries. Within the cross-fire of ideas it was to take another four hundred years to iron out clearly the full universal significance of the Christ-Event."

Dr. Lane's deep treatise of *The Reality of Jesus* allots three chapters after the introduction-46 pages to the historical part of "the Christ-Event," while the approximately 100 remaining pages are devoted to the theological interpretation. The reader especially the non-Christian-will perhaps be eager to delve further into the historical research than does the author in this book, but the Irish publisher reminds us on the cover that the book, "integrates the findings of biblical research with the developments of dogmatic theology. It brings together the 'old' and the 'new' into a fresh synthesis. In particular the book has been written for preachers, teachers, and students of the good news of Jesus Christ." These particular readers of course will be more interested in the theological interpretation. However, it is very promising for inter-religious dialogue that a Catholic theologian provides such historical and critical background of the "Christ-Event" for the present and coming generations of Christian theologians. Dr. Lane explains precisely how different interpretations of the Christ-Event can rise: "Obviously the mode of existence belonging to the risen Christ of faith is radically different and therefore discontinuous with the mode of historical existence which attached to the earthly life of Jesus. It is in this sense that there is a distinct dimension of discontinuity, a discontinuity which is specifically historical. The reality of the risen Christ of faith is unhistorical or better, trans-historical, and is therefore to that extent discontinuous with the Jesus of history."

A Muslim reader would appreciate such statements of the Irish Catholic theologian about the relation of Jesus Christ to God as the following:

It is important to distinguish here between the revelation of a reality and the reality itself. The expression of a reality especially through the historical revelation of that reality is not equivalent to the reality itself. If this were not so there would be no expression or revelation but rather pure naked reality. The mystery of Jesus Christ is the expression or revelation of God to man in historical form The mystery of God however is not exhausted in Jesus. There can never be a total expression of God on the level of creation. The finite can never contain the totality of the infinite. The mystery of Jesus Christ is the

key to the mystery of God. It must not, however, take away the mystery of God. In the light of these observations it is much more desirable to talk therefore about Jesus as the image of the invisible God than to talk simply about Jesus as God.

The Incarnation... is not an isolated exception but rather the definitive culmination of a process already set in motion through the gift of creation. To this extent creation is the basis of Incarnation and Incarnation is the fullness of creation. In a certain sense creation is itself a form of "incarnation" in that it mediates however obscurely traces of the divine power and presence which become formalised in the Christ-Event.

[The] suggestion that the Incarnation is a mystery continually taking place around us in the light of the mystery of Jesus Christ is acknowledged by the Second Vatican Council when it points out that "by his Incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every man." Here the Council clearly recognises the equality, the dignity, and the sacredness of each and every individual as the vehicle of God's incarnate grace.

[This] reintroduces the mystery of Jesus Christ into the mystery of God. For too long Christology has been divorced from theology... Indeed at times Christology tended to become an end in itself. This can be seen in certain forms of myopic christocentricism which can be misleading. More recently another Catholic theologian, the German Hans Küng, in his latest work, *On Being a Christian*, "doubts that Christ pre-existed in the Godhead before his human birth and believes the early church's definitions of the diety of Christ to be Hellenistic. To him, the point is simply that God was present in Jesus revealing himself and making known his claims on man and his offer of forgiveness. The test of being a Christian 'is not to this or that dogma... but the acceptance of faith in Christ and imitation of Christ'" (*Time*, January 3, 1977).

In regard to "salvation," the author of *The Reality of Jesus* emphasises "the Catholic tradition which acknowledges the necessary role that man must plan in the coming to be of faith... [and which] is summarised in the doctrine of 'justification by faith and good works'." This doctrine implies without prejudice to the priority of God's invitation that man must cooperate actively in the reception of the diving gift of faith."

The writer of this review, being a Muslim, finds in such a statement a solid ground for a fruitful dialogue between Muslims and Christians, and hopes that more parallel efforts would be made by Muslim theologians in understanding and expressing a Qur'an Christology.

Treat this discussion as an exercise in hope. I would for this moment only suspend past pains and disappointments and suspend also my conviction that where we are now as Jews and Christians is better than any other place-better because it is our reality. Further, I also believe that the separate voices of our official religions will ultimately contribute more in the unanimous peace in praise of G-d than a plain chant in which all blend....

There is little that a Jew can say upon reading Lane. This book puzzles me. Here is a man who documents how all of present-day Christology hangs on a hair. The farther he returns to the past the more traces of the unique, special, the second person of the Trinity vanish and what remains is a teacher of Aggadic Pharisaism who differed from the other teachers of Halakhic Pharisaism.

Lane's method is a sort of last-ditch stand when a person encounters the conflicting claims of historic material and of creedal dogma. The two are not compatible and the means of the low-ascending theology are just not able to sway the historian while the believer is threatened by the historic stuff which makes his or her lush creedal significance to his or her Christ who pales into one of the many teachers in the *Sitz im Legen* which the historian gives, then why bother believing? I cannot believe that just another rabbi teaching Aggadah to fisher-folk would excite the regular Christian to participate in a Mass done in Jesus' memory. So who is Christ?

Call him by his Hebrew term, the *Mashiah*, annointed one, and claim his descent from David in order that there will be fulfilled that "a sprout come forth from Jesse..." and you run into the trouble of. (a) The job description given to that messiah has not been fulfilled by him. The ironic order of universal Shalom has not yet arrived. As we are told of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk who, when he lived in Jerusalem, once heard a madman blow the ram's horn on the holy Temple mount. When people came to him and said "The Messiah has arrived; he blew the ram's horn." R. Mendel opened the window, looked out, and said, "No. He has not come. Everything is still as it was before." The state of exile continues unrelieved and for us Jews aggravated by inquisitions, expulsions, pogroms, and extermination camps. One might cry out: "If it is as you say that *you* are saved-how come you make *us* suffer so much?" No, the seat of the Davidic Messiah has not yet been occupied by his rightful descendant, and that is that. And (b) What sense is there in the genealogy which traces Joseph's descent from David if Joseph had nothing to do with the biological

event of Jesus' birth? So, even if the Shalom order had arrived, Jesus could not be billed as the Davidic Prince of Peace. Both on the fact of exile and on the theory of Davidic descent, we have no Messiah as yet. To some extent I feel ashamed to raise those old disputed issues, but somehow the Christologist is not ashamed to lay the heavy claims on Jesus and there is after all this tradition which we Jews experience in countless ways as leaning on us and urging us to accept this Christ as the Messiah we expect, and we can only push back by retorting: We will accept a biological descendant of David as the Messiah when through him the Shalom order is established.

But wait, is there only one messiah spot for Jesus to occupy? Ever since the break between Judah and Joseph, the Kingdom of Israel from the Kingdom of Judah, there has been a claim for the coming of a Messiah, son of Joseph. This Messiah comes not to redeem sinners-this belongs to the Davidic Messiah-but to redeem the righteous and to teach them that they too need to come to *Teshuvah* (turning-*metanoia*). Being a descendant of Joseph the Zaddik he, as the Midrash (Vayosha 24) has it, will, after having served as a leader of the Jewish troops, be killed by a warrior from the West named Armilus (Romulus). He is, as the Jewish tradition places him, the righteous suffering servant of Isaiah 53 who is to be martyred. Let's put this together. An Ephraimite, a descendant of *Joseph* who comes from Galilee (no need for the census story at all), who lives an exemplary holy life (perhaps there is an underplaying of other companions he may have had in favour of fisherfolk, publicans, and sinners which may have helped in making converts among the Gentiles of the Roman empire, but not in Jerusalem where Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea become more important), and is martyred by "Romulus" could very well have become the Mashiah ben *Joseph* for Jews.

If Christians would have so spoken of Jesus then the chances are that Jews would have been able to join Christians in the Good Friday lament al count Jesus as one of the ten Martyrs of the State and included his death with that of Rabbi Aqiba in the dirges of the Yom Kippur martyrology. Jews could have even added the extra bite of bread at the conclusion of the meal as a memorial and have had a cup of thanksgiving-Eucharist-for the same intention and prayed in the daily liturgy for the resurrection of the Josephite Messiah that he might lead us to meet the Messiah ben David. But... the Gospel writers were prisoners of hope. Too impatient to postpone their hopes for the salvation of *this* world, they pushed it up to heaven, and as soon as the temporal

order was in their hands Christians became triumphalists in an unredeemed world. Not content to assign the dignity of Messiah Ben Joseph to Jesus, claims were made for the New Adam that the world's condition refused to substantiate and all the transubstantiations subsequently did not change the accidents of wine, bread, death, and martyrdom.

But why identify the second person of the Trinity with the Messiah and come with inflated claims when we can, instead of turning to the synoptics, turn to John? His formulation of Jesus as the *Memra*, the *Logos*, the Word that was G-d, was with G-d, was made flesh creates the more significant Christology. Of the three tasks so well described by Rosenzweig in his *Star of Redemption*, Creation, Revelation, and Redemption, the real claim was made that Jesus is the *Revelation*. That equates Jesus with Torah, not with Mashiah. If there be a being who so lives as the Creator in Heaven wishes the being to live that he or she becomes a living Torah, at least Jews of a mystical, aggadic, Kabbalistic-Hassidic persuasion seem to have a stronger theological warrant for dialogue. The Zaddik is G-d's possibility for humanity in a physical body. The Zaddik is Torah, who decrees and G-d agrees; for the Zaddik's sake the all was created. "G-d does not need a world," the Maggid of Mezericth teaches, but since Zaddikirn like to lead worlds, he creates worlds for them. Zaddikim can heal and help, but most of those who see them utter the blessing. "Blessed art Thou L-rd our G-d King of the Universe who has apportioned of thy wisdom to them who fear thee." The Zaddik, at once an archetypal model for behaviour, is also an accessible model and anyone who will follow the Zaddik-in the older sense of *imitatio*-can also become a zaddik. There are tractates of all other commandments in the Talmud, but for Love, Faith, Awe, and devotion only a living Zaddik can serve a generation as the tractate of the duties of the heart.

The Zaddik is the Sinai event for all those who stand in a positive relationship to the Zaddik. The Zaddik serves the souls of the disciples and devotees as a general soul which is for the disciple the interface to G-d's grace, light, and love on this plane. Now all those teachings are more compatible to the soteric claim of Christianity. The Paraclete, the mediator, the WAY to the Creator, all these are what the Zaddik is for mystical Jews and the Torah is for all Jews in general. The Christian can say that, fulfilling the Torah, Jesus became the Torah now immanent in his heart and soul without making at the same time the extravagant claim for Jesus to be the fulfillment of the redemption. For, although

the Torah was given at Sinai, no Jew expected that this would so transform the whole world that it would usher in the irenic realm of G-d's kingdom. It is on the contrary a revelation—a survival guide and handbook of how to manage in a world that is not yet redeemed.

Having stated the above from a Jewish position, is this not also close to the Christian one? The final redemption still awaits another COMING. In the meantime, there is the word made flesh, the paradigm of the fullest G-d in the fullest human, the *sotor*, reconciler, connector to the Creator. On the Jewish side such an open and clear statement gives possibility to the notion that Jesus is for Christians who follow in his footsteps, pray in his name to the Creator, love one another as he bad loved his disciples, and await the redemption with the light of the world having poured itself-*kenosis*-into the souls of his followers. He is the word that the Christian hears spoken of the Creator in the tongue of the man, the rebbe from Nazareth. His followers once named Nazarenes can now be seen by Jews as Nazarener Hassidim. in the same way as Jews who follow the Satmarer Rebbe as Satmarer Hassidim and those who follow the Belzer are Belzer Hassidim.

There is yet a deeper aspect of Christology worth considering from the principle of dialogue. There is the experience of the Christ (I do not mean the Messiah aspect, but the Son of G-d aspect) which is the confidant, the compassionate, the Holy, the one who is all sacred heart, who is the love of G-d which is also the G-d is love and he who abides in love abides in G-d and G-d in him. True, this aspect is far from the ken of the exoteric Jew but close to the esoteric one who is a hassid or follows the kabbalah.

I remember a conversation I once had visiting the late Thomas Merton at Gethsemani. Merton responded to my question what the Trinity meant to him by quoting the Greek fathers who said that G-d is awesome might and creative power is the Father, G-d as loving and compassionate and working to bring all souls to their reconciliation and salvation in the Son. G-d as this love is revealed to the human mind and gives human being the revelation of G-d's will and wisdom is the Holy Spirit. I responded to this that I believe that G-d creates, and, if this dimension of an infinite number of dimensions is talked about under the name "Father," this has not only enough biblical and theological warrant for Jews but is no point of quarrel. That God loves and in this capacity is called the Son also makes a certain amount of sense to a kabbalist. For in the Zohar the Tetragrammaton is interpreted to mean YHVH as follows: Y is the Father-Hokhmah,

wisdom. H is the Mother-Binah, understanding. V is the Son-Ziyr Anpin, the heart and the compassion, the one really pointed to in the YHVH; and H at the end is the Daughter-the Shekhinnah, the sabbath, the divine presence and, yes, the Ruah Haqodesh-the Holy Spirit. As long as we do not exclude the other manifestations by declaring that there are only three, we have further room for dialogue and understanding. Now it is also true that the Kingdom of the YHVH has not yet begun on this earth and, as Zechariah foretold, that will happen on "THAT DAY on which YHVH will be one and His name ONE."

What this calls for is a willingness to admit that all our formulations about G-d are nothing but tentative stammerings of blind and exiled children of Eve responding to the light deeply hidden in the recesses of their nostalgic longing for the untainted origin in which one needed not to look through the glass darkly but could see. This can even make us proud of our traditions and heritage as the storehouse of those stammerings of the souls that were filled by G-d with the grace of that holy moment that defied definition and that was forced by ecclesiastical lawyers to be encapsulated in a stateable wording. The mistake that was made was to take the ecstatic exclamations of the overwhelmed souls and to make them numbered *articles* of creeds instead of *acts* of faith made in fear and trembling.

It is this move which, for all the balance in Lane's book, he did not make. It is indeed difficult to say that the magisterium of the church-that the Torah and all its commentaries-are *deo gratis* what we do have and treasure, but only as the human snapshots of moments of G-d's nearness; that, although we cannot improve on the divine which flows into our vessels, we can and must take responsibility for keeping these vessels clean and transparent and not at all as essential as the light they contain. Perhaps we are as dogmatists, small souls of small faith who do not dare trust that G-d will be with us as G-d was with our forbears and that G-d will not abandon us nor forsake us.

It then behoves the poor of the spirit of all creeds and denominations to support each other in the desperate acts of faith which we make in the face of the exile and the holocausts and enter into a dialogue among fellow servants and children of *one* Creator.

Gerard S. Sloyan

It is not often that a scholar interested in the reality of Jesus masters modem critical study of his message and by indirection his person, as

well as what Christian tradition has made of him doctrinally as the Christ of God, in the interests of a modem synthesis of the two. Protestant scholarship tends to take a giant step from modem criticism, either historically skeptical in a Bultmann-to-Conzelmann line or admitting more historical validity to the gospels over a Käsemann-to-Jeremias spectrum, to a presentation of Jesus Christ as the object of the church's faith. Even those such as Pannenberg and Moule or J. A. T. Robinson who try to keep a foot in the other camp, biblical in the first case and systematic in the other two, are not greatly troubled by the inhibitions imposed by the christological councils on the results of critical-historical method. Roman Catholic expositors of the mystery of Jesus Christ, for their part, tend to be at ease in systematic categories (e.g., Rahner, Kasper) of biblical (e.g., Vawter, Brown), but not to take on the complex task of viewing Christ through second-, fifth-, and twentieth-century eyes.

The Irish Catholic scholar whose work is here under review reports creditably on work in progress in the several disciplines. What emerges is a Jesus Christ in whom the learned and those acquainted with the problems which the learned face can believe. Missing from the treatment is any attempt to cope with faith in Christ on mythical terms apart from the historical, such as characterises numerous contributors to John Hick's recent symposium, *The Myth of God Incarnate*. Dermot Lane means to be historically grounded throughout. A problem that necessarily arises from this choice is his insufficient attention to religious myth in the period of the formation of the gospels and, on new terms, of the Church Fathers and the early councils. The determined attempts of the latter at clear speech about the ineffable, which included some philosophical language, do not eliminate the mythic component from the formulas arrived at. The terms of myth (even "Father," "Son," and "Spirit") are poetic and dramatic, and no attempts to speak of its historical or ontological correlate can dispel the questions it raises.

The overall report submitted by Dr. Lane on the present state of biblical, historical, and systematic scholarship in Christology is so well done that to cavil at certain small matters could seem ungenerous. A resume of his achievement should therefore precede attention to a few points of criticism. He holds throughout for the continuity between the creation, defined as God's continued support of finite being, and the work of human salvation achieved through the Incarnation. The manifestation of God "perfectly" through the man Jesus is the high point of God's self-disclosure through creatures. The latter can be called an incarnation of God with a lower-case "i."

Consequently, the enfleshing or en-manning of God's *Logos* is not to be thought of as a sharp break with all that went before, least of all as the correction of an initial blunder on God's part or failure to create humanity in grace. The Christology of this book is Scotist in its contention that God was fittingly revealed in a man at a certain point in history, apart from the need to redeem humanity from sin. Dr. Lane draws on Teilhard's exposition of the cosmic Christ, which in turn derives from the hymnic developments found in Col. 1 and Eph. 1. His modern theological mentor is Karl Rahner, whose evolutionary Christology holds that the universal human capacity for self-transcendence, to which God's reaching out to every human being corresponds, achieves its peak in Jesus of Nazareth. That Incarnation is unique because of both God's unique choice of Jesus and the latter's unique obedience. The matter is put this way: "Jesus different in kind in his relationship with God but not to the extent that he becomes isolated from the rest of mankind with whom he has [is?) fully identified. This difference in kind is based on his difference in degree from the rest of mankind." As is frequently the case in *The Reality of Jesus*, this statement does not receive the metaphysical justification it requires. Rather, reference is provided to two other authors who make the same affirmation. This is not said in criticism so much as in illustration of the limits of a sketch as brief as the present one. Rahner's extended treatment, found in several dense essays, goes on to hold that the personal union of God's *Logos* with each risen saint will constitute no less than a multitude of personal Incarnations, that of the one Mediator Jesus preserving its unique character from his earthly days. The Lane thesis does not explore his hypothetical question.

It is essential to the author's argument that the historical character of the Incarnation claimed for Jesus (a dogma which gradually unfolded itself upon the infant church, as the divinity of Jesus became clear) be maintained. He is convinced that the "only mode of access we have to the divine Sonship of Jesus is in and through his humanity." Elsewhere, he states that the "perfection of humanity mediates divinity so that by being true Man Jesus is true God... [He] realises in the fullest possible way the graced capacities of man and thereby incarnates a real (hypostatic) unity between God and man. Since the pre- and post-ressurection continuity of the man Jesus is essential to belief in a historical and not merely a mythical figure-though faith in him as risen to life in the final age necessarily mythicizes him-the gospels must record a discernible historical figure, or they provide no basis for the kind of faith the church professes. "As a general rule we can

say that the 'higher' Christology tends to become [viz, maintaining the descent of the *Logos* into humanity], the greater the need to return to the historical Jesus as a source and check." Historical research into the gospels must be seen as a permanent and necessary feature of contemporary Christology, safeguarding our understanding of the full mystery of Jesus Christ.

In Chapter 3, "Rediscovering the Historical Jesus," Dr. Lane explores the first layer of gospel material which discloses him as an "eschatological prophet" whose "words and deeds... brought him into direct conflict with the official leaders of Judaism." This chapter is perhaps the least rigorous of all for, while giving evidence of the complexity of the problem of discovering Jesus' authentic sayings, it largely sets the problem aside and posits a quite arguable authentic core. The statement in a later chapter is more guarded, which holds for the "eschatological suggestiveness of the words and deeds of Jesus such as the announcement of the Kingdom of God, the critical call to repentance, the setting up of a new table fellowship, and the promise of salvation." There is a very subtle distinction to be made here which the Irish scholar fails to make, namely between the traditional materials, already theologically developed, which are the first stratum of the gospels, and undeveloped historical reminiscences of which the present gospels provide no examples. In failing to make the distinction he gives the impression that the words and deeds of Jesus, leading to the teaching which be lists above, are fairly readily available as history. This is simply not true. It is compounded by the attribution to Jesus of various phrases that are clearly examples of Matthean or Johannine thought. This practice is strange in its omission of a caution which the author could easily have issued. In brief, the important claim for the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth is weakened by being insufficiently minimal and even by the false insinuations, through inadvertence, of its wider extent. Throughout, there is a mild insensitivity to the Jews when gospel statements about them are paraphrased.

An observation needs to be made about Dr. Lane's suggestion that, "What was formerly called person now approximates to what we call nature and what was known as nature in the past is understood today as person." Three modem authors are cited in support of this contention which, if it were widely thought to be true, would cut several Gordian knots. In fact, however, Nestorius in proposing his "person of the union" in the spirit of Dr. Lane's suggestion could not convince his contemporaries at Ephesus that he did not have in mind a second principle of unity in Christ. Moreover, reference to "the

impression given by Apollinarius and continued by Cyril to some extent that the human nature had no hypostasis thus implying that it was an impersonal *an-hypostatic* human nature," is not only a considerable understatement, but also the very reason why neither Cyril nor III Constantinople (A.D. 680-681)-which specified the *Logos* as the one *hypostasis* in Christ-would let the Lane position stand.

If he is right about the exact reverse understanding of person and nature then and now, he must be referring to the situation before and possibly at Nicaea (325) which successively faded through the period of Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), and II Constantinople (553). In any case, forgetting his own counsel, he writes: 'This union of God and man in Jesus is an absolute and complete union so that we can say Jesus is the Word Incarnate and mean by this that Jesus is the divine *person (hypostasis)* of the Logos, who is the perfect self-expression of God, made flesh." That is perfectly good Cyrillian doctrine, whereas consistency on the author's part would have required the statement that Jesus possesses the divine *nature (hypostasis)* of the *Logos*, which is the perfect expression of God, and in him is made flesh. That consistency might have made the ecclesiastical censor read the sentence twice. It would also have drawn a Cyrillian thunderbolt. The present reviewer happens to think, it a better expression of the mystery.

These observations are minor in light of the overall excellence of the author's achievement. He has provided a Christology well suited to those determined to hold fast to the historical character of the gospels and the traditions of the church. If at times, his ironic spirit has led him to reconcile opposites out of the Christian past, correction can be made in future editions.

Dermot A. Lane

Much progress has been made over the last ten years in the area of interfaith discussions among the major religions of the world. The emergence of the "global village" through easy travel facilities and instant telecommunications has opened up fundamental questions about religious differences. More explicitly, from the Catholic side, the Second Vatican council, especially through its *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate)*, 1965, created a new climate of openness toward and dialogue with the major religions of the world. Within this situation the Catholic Church singled out the unique position of the Judaic and Muslim religions (N.A.a.4; N.A. a.3; L.G. a.5). In 1974, the Holy See set up two new commissions; one for Islam, and the other for Judaism. In January, 1975, "Guidelines

and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*" were issued. These initiatives by the Catholic Church have done a lot to breakdown prejudices and misunderstandings on all sides. One of the problems of interfaith dialogue and dialogue at the international level is that it tends to become bogged down by questions of procedure, protocol, and diplomacy. In addition, when dialogue does take place it often addresses issues which by-pass fundamental questions. For instance discussions about the relationship between the church and Israel or the Bible and the Qur'an must sooner or later return to the fundamental questions of Jesus. To this extent the editor of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* is to be commended for initiating an interfaith discussion around the foundational reality of Jesus.

Though, *The Reality of Jesus* was primarily written with a view to working out the significance of Jesus within a Christian perspective, it is all the more interesting to have an inspection of one's work from the outside by a Jew and a Muslim as well as by a fellow Christian. I, therefore, welcome and value the observations of all three participants in this discussion.

In the short, space allotted to me I can only briefly comment on the more significant suggestions of my reviewers and then go on to indicate some of the key areas of development in Christology that might be of interest to a Jewish-Christian-Muslim-trialogue.

Fathi Osman's reading *The Reality of Jesus* as a Muslim is most interesting and encouraging. He has clearly grasped the general thesis of the book. He keenly appreciates the value of a low-ascending-Christology from a Muslim point of view. His acknowledgement of the fact that as a Muslim be can go along "half way" with the christological analysis outlined in *The Reality of Jesus* is a clear indication of the progress taking place in the Muslim-Christian encounter as well as an invitation to future dialogue. Osman's response is a vindication of the importance of the historical approach in theology when dealing with interfaith questions.

I must confess to finding the reaction of Zalman Schachter puzzling. He begins by adopting a highly literalistic critique of *The Reality of Jesus* and of Christianity in general. He objects that he will only "accept a biological descendant of David as the Messiah when through him the Shalom order is established." He then proceeds to outline from a Kabbalistic point of view a series of most interesting and suggestive ideas about Jesus that might be explored in dialogue. These include Jesus as "the word made flesh, paradigm of the fullest G-d in the

fullest human, the soter, reconciler, connector to the Creator... the compassionate, the Holy, the one who is all sacred heart, who is the love of G-d..." In fact, Prof. Schachter will find on pp. 117-146 of *The Reality of Jesus* bases other than mystical for a discussion of these very suggestive points.

From a Christian point of view, Gerard Sloyan has many helpful and constructive observations to make. He put his finger on a christological nerve-center when he asks about the use of the terms "person" and "nature." There is the patristic period whose usage is the least clearly defined in spite of conciliar statements; then there is the later received interpretation of these terms through Aristotelian-Thomistic ontology; and finally there is the twentieth-century psychological understanding of the terms. When I claim there has been a reversal in the meaning of these terms, I am referring to the second and third phases. It might be argued, as Walter Kasper does, that these two are complementary and that taken together they reflect what the first phase was about. This is an attractive solution, but it raises serious questions as to the meaning of pre-twentieth-century traditional Christology. Does it necessarily follow that several Gordian knots would have to be cut if one holds that "person" and "nature" have come to mean something quite different today from what they meant, say in the last two centuries? Surely our contact with the living tradition of Christianity does not depend simply on verbal continuity.

If progress is to be made in the Jewish-Christian encounter, then it is essential that we take a more extensive look at the relationship that exists between Jesus and Judaism. For too long it has been said that Jesus makes sense only "over and against" Judaism. This simplistic point of view has been a source of much Antisemitism in Christian circles. However, critical studies in recent times by Jews and Christians clearly bring out the Jewishness of Jesus and his teaching (G. Vermes, D. Flusser, R. Aron, B. Z. Bokser). Not only that, but it can be argued convincingly that Christianity grew out of an "intra-Jewish critique of Israel and that the early Christian interpretation is truly a Jewish interpretation of Jesus" (E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesuz Het Verhaal van een Levende* [Bloemendaal: Nelisson, 1974), p. 25). In other words Christianity is an extension of a particular form of Judaism.

One of the central issues in Palestine during the time of Jesus was the question about what constituted the Torah. It is within this context that Jesus criticises what he regarded as the human-made elements of the Law which get in the way of the close relationship between God

and the individual that is intended by the Torah. In order to bring about a return to the Torah, Jesus preached repentence and *metanoia*. This in turn would prepare the people for the coming Reign of God. For Jesus the really important thing in life was adherence to the Torah which consisted in doing God's will. Thus, far from diminishing the center-piece of Judaism, Jesus is the champion of the Torah as a particular way of life that unites the individual with God. This dimension of the Jewishness of Jesus and his teaching must surely figure prominently in the Jewish-Christian dialogue. The Jewishness of early Christianity and Christianness of first-century Judaism has much to contribute to the understanding of both traditions.

Another important consideration that should affect interfaith dialogue, especially at the level of Christian-Muslim discussion, is the current widening of christological horizons. At present, there is a definite shift taking place from an exclusive Christology to an inclusivist Christology. Once the religious value of the other major world religions is recognised, as do the documents of the Second Vatican Council, then one is moved implicitly to an inclusivist Christology. This means, in effect, that the starting point of future Christology must be an acceptance of God's universal activity in and through other religious peoples and communities. It is against this background that Christology will work out its unique understanding of God as active in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This inclusivist Christology will show how the Jesus personifies and crystalizes the universal presence of God in other world religions. From there this Christology will move on to indicate how something radically new took place in the life of Jesus and how this something new is normative for the Christian understanding of God in the world.

In conclusion, it should be remembered that all religious peoples are united in their common search for God. The Jew, the Christian, and the Muslim are all concerned to promote a personal appreciation of the mystery of God. There are many ways to the one true God. This diversity should not be divisive, but rather enriching. The Christian way is one that is centered around Jesus Christ as the personal embodiment and expression of God's presence in the world. For the Christian, Jesus' cause is God's cause. To say this, however, is by no means to remove or destroy the mystery of God. Instead, it is to deepen our awareness of the one basic, incomprehensible mystery that encircles and envelopes our lives. If *The Reality of Jesus* helps in any way to open up that mystery, then it will have achieved its primary purpose.

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FOR DIALOGUE AMONG CULTURE AND CIVILISATIONS

CONFERENCE ON FOSTERING DIALOGUE AMONG CULTURES AND CIVILIZATIONS THROUGH CONCRETE AND SUSTAINED INITIATIVES

I. INTRODUCTION

For several years, and especially since the United Nations Year for Dialogue among Civilizations, 2001, the issues raised by the dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples have been addressed in many conferences and meetings organised by the United nations, the partners associated in the present joint initiative and numerous stakeholders in a wide range of countries and regions. They have given rise to resolutions, declarations, programmes and publications and it is clear that an important advocacy role has been fulfilled by these activities, in particular with regard to highlighting that the dialogue should serve several purposes:

- enhancing similarities and common values, while cherishing differences;
- working to adopt and promote a mindset which views the eradication of poverty, racism and xenophobia, terror, extremism, hatred and intolerance as an inescapable moral imperative for each human being;
- moving beyond mere conversation, altruism and participation to concrete problem-solving activities, encompassing education and training, scientific communication and cultural cooperation;
- fostering pluralism, pluralistic approaches and freedom of expression, not only between cultures and traditions, but also within them.

It has been unanimously agreed that dialogue must be based on the following principles, values and attitudes:

- the equal dignity of cultures and their capacity to cross-fertilize, inspire and enrich each other;
- the need to uphold and enhance cultural diversity;
- mutual respect, with the ultimate goal of learning to live together;
- openness and self-critical attitudes—as each culture or civilization can be critical towards others; but should also be critical towards itself, including a critical examination of historical memory;
- self-respect and awareness of one's own values and ideals as a basis to lay the foundations of a non-arrogant and fruitful dialogue leading to mutual enrichment.

In a world characterised by a great diversity of cultures—as recognised and appreciated in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) and also the Islamic Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2004), by globalization of changes affecting all areas of human activity, and by a recognition of the role of religion in societies, it is necessary to reconcile the values of the individual, the community or national identities with universally shared values. Globalization should not prevent local cultures from thriving and developing, while emphasis on local dimensions should not run counter to regional and universal orientations and approaches.

Worldwide, religions have played and are still playing an important role in shaping the cultural identity of individuals, communities and peoples, and they are a key component of the building of civilizations and cultures. Religions can and should have a role in the promotion and support of a positive intercultural dialogue and building on contributions emanating from inter-religious and interfaith dialogue.

Universally shared values are those which link citizens to their community and at the same time commit them to share a vision for their future, based on tolerance, justice, solidarity, trust and mutual respect and understanding, moral behaviour, awareness of the need for democratic governance and sustainable development, the responsible exercise of authority, and the recognition and treatment of others as equals. Above all, there is a need to strive for a better reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic dimensions of other peoples, nations and communities.

II. THE ROAD AHEAD: DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A JOINT INITIATIVE

The advocacy for a constructive dialogue among cultures and civilizations is a task that must be anchored in, and nurtured by the nations and peoples, as well as by the international, regional governmental and non-governmental organisations. It is part of a much needed pedagogy, particularly through the current difficult times when a mistaken notion of "clash of civilizations" is invoked by some quarters.

There is an overwhelming conviction worldwide, if not a sense of urgency, that concrete and sustained activities should be designed and implemented in all regions and by the widest range of partners and stakeholders, so as to make the dialogue a reality of our daily life and to buttress peace within and among the nations through a series of concrete, results-oriented actions.

This need has been strongly emphasised by the governing bodies of the organisations involved in the present joint initiative. However, this does not mean to start from scratch. Rather, the challenge is to build on the already numerous declarations, reports and initiatives containing a rich front of activities, actions and ideas building on and fostering dialogue; they need to be strengthened, made sustainable and translated into concrete and specific measures that can realistically be implemented within a given time-line. They also need to be extended to, and diversified in, the areas of education, the sciences, culture and communication.

This is why the partners who have launched this joint initiative considered it an important, if not indispensable step to call an international conference, to be attended mostly by experts and practitioners with demonstrated experience and knowledge in the various areas which can benefit from intercultural dialogue at national, regional or international levels. The conference will also bring together specific members of the secretariats of the organising, supporting and cooperation institutions. Indeed, their presence, involvement and commitments are particularly crucial for the desired and necessary follow-up to the Conference through the workplans of the organisations.

The Conference should thus be seen as a launch pad for the development and adoption of a series of concrete measures and activities exploring how specific objectives can be achieved through various dialogue modalities, strengthened and encouraged at national, regional and international levels, identifying good practices from the regions represented.

III. AREAS OF FOCUS: INDICATE ELEMENTS FOR A PROGRAMME OF CONCRETE ACTION

1. Education

Quality education is a pre-requisite for dialogue among cultures, civilizations and peoples because it encompasses not only quantifiable measures of educational attainment, but also the qualitative aspects of curricula and their contents including shared values, human rights, tolerance and mutual understanding. Educational institutions and learning materials can uniquely serve as a vehicle for dialogue and intercultural understanding. This also involves working with obstacles for educational planners at central and regional levels. In fact, there has been and there is a repeated appeal from governments, politicians, parliamentarians, educators, decision-makers and civic society representatives to use education as a privileged tool for fostering the dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

(a) Citizenship education to teach adolescents and young people their legal rights and obligations, law, commitment to shared values, equity and justice, tolerance and respect for the other. This should focus on developing the capacity to live together in a democratic environment, while respecting the persons, but not their opinions when/if these are inherently intolerable and opposed to human rights and basic freedoms.

(b) Multicultural education aimed at enhancing and improving knowledge of culture, civilizations, religions and traditions, in particular through the teaching of foreign languages, the popularisation of works in the social and human sciences, literature and arts, and the creation of university chairs on subjects relating to dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

Both civic and multicultural education can be achieved through the design and broad dissemination of teacher's guides and curriculum models, through the revision of national textbooks and school handbooks as well as of university curricula, particularly in key disciplines such as history, geography, philosophy, social and human sciences. This is a long-term task, but an imperative one, which could be carried out at sub-regional and national levels by teams of teachers and university specialists with the assistance of international and regional organisations (e.g. UNESCO, ISESCO, ALECSO, specialised foundations and NGOs).

(c) Textbook revision and exchange programmes: Textbooks appropriate for the 21st century indeed need to reflect more inclusive pedagogies and diversified content which not only impact academic knowledge, but also engage learners in interactions leading to the acquisition of life skills and universally-shared values within a human rights perspective. Textbooks present an opportunity for engaged dialogue between students, between teachers, and by extension between students and their families, and ultimately between cultures. It is therefore relevant that this proposed part of the future plan of action be thoroughly discussed at the Conference.

Discussions are proposed to focus on the:

- methodologies for examining textbooks from a gender and a human rights perspective, so as to eliminate stereotypes and develop a positive approach to gender issues and to respect of human rights and basic freedoms;
- ways and means of integrating balanced and accurate views of other cultures and civilizations, e.g. in the teaching of history and sociology of religions and civilizations at secondary school level;
- the role of the teacher in interpreting and developing textbook materials that are unbiased and free from stereotypes.
- expected results from modernisation of textbooks include the acquisition of competences and skills necessary for dialogue between cultures such as critical thinking and the ability to observe from more than one perspective ("multi-perspectivity").

School links and exchanges have also a deep impact on intercultural learning in schools if intercultural exchanges are integrated as a strategy for curriculum development and reform. The Conference would be invited to discuss ways and means to foster interregional and sub-regional level school exchanges and links.

2. Science

The key modalities of dialogue-related action concern the establishment of regional cooperation mechanisms in the Scientific Fields with a view to increasing and systematising knowledge of diverse cultures. Efforts should also include the promotion of scientific collaboration, networking and interaction, for example through the creation and strengthening of scientific networks and twinning

arrangements among universities. With increasing globalization and changing patterns of work organisation, international dialogue is also particularly important in the engineering sciences in the context of professional practice in such areas as standards, quality assurance, accreditation and mobility.

Discussions could focus on:

- the study and documentation of ethical principles and practices in the main scientific issues, such as genetic research, fresh water, etc, and the promotion of a common stand on these issues, in respect of the Cultural and religious considerations.
- the promotion of scientific and technological exchange and the quest for sustainable development, in particular through sharing and networking among knowledge holders from all knowledge systems;
- interdisciplinary global networks of specialists and partner institutions, including public and private sector partnerships.

3. Social and Human Sciences

A priority should be given for the continuation of dialogue between philosophers of the Arab World and those from other regions in order to promote mutual understanding between philosophical traditions and especially the establishment of intellectual partnerships in order to better understand major problems confronting the various cultures concerned and their consequences for social stability and prevention of conflicts. Within this framework, in November 2004 UNESCO ready launched a philosophical dialogue between the Arab world and Asia which will continue in 2005 in Seoul (South Korea) on the topic of democracy and social justice.

Emphasis should be placed on the promotion of philosophy in order to widen and enrich the debates in progress on the problems faced by the contemporary world open to civil society; for this purpose, the implementation of the three pillars of UNESCO's intersectoral strategy for philosophy, together with the celebration of World Philosophy Day could constitute major assets.

Analysis of new forms of violence, the promotion of democracy, human rights, human security and knowledge societies strong domains to reinforce a dialogue among cultures and civilizations, and this, at a time when the debate on the long-term nature and effects of the processes of globalization is at a turning point in various parts of the world.

The contribution of historians to the dialogue among civilizations must be reinforced through interregional partnerships aiming at offering a tribune for the different perceptions of historical processes, in particular, those that touch contemporary history, following the example of the conferences organised by UNESCO on "Civilizations in the Eye of the Other" parts I and II.

4. Culture

A particular challenge lies in demonstrating that cultural heritage and identity can become a powerful symbol for fostering national and regional understanding, reciprocal knowledge and indeed reconciliation, where appropriate. Once respect for cultural heritage allows people to understand themselves, it will also be a key to understanding others. Attention should also be paid to the re-creation of stereotypes, prejudices and xenophobia in contemporary culture (specific cultural forms and expressions). Concrete cooperation can contribute to intercultural dialogue e.g.:

a. Cultural festivals and events

There is considerable scope to set a more effective agenda of dialogue in most cultural festivals and events, such as global sport events, cultural fora and capitals, art and book fairs, youth festivals and encounters. For instance, the IMAGES festival has been held in Denmark since 1991 to foster dialogue and cultural understanding among the public in this country; the event is based on extensive networking, cooperation between civic society, co-funding and partnership.

b. Cultural and musical creation and interaction

Possibilities shall be explored to promote dialogue involving diverse aspects of cultural creations from different cultures. Such interaction of cultures may include musical interaction involving songs and original instruments from various cultures as well as exchange and partnership between writers, painters, musicians or producers, with a focus on translation and joint productions, in order to consolidate and foster the human dimensions of dialogue.

c. Arts, arts management and creative industries

Artists and producers of cultural goods can foster genuine intercultural dialogue and understanding. An enabling environment should be created in this regard. This can be done through a variety of initiatives, which include exchange of best practices, training, education, and networking. For instance, in cooperation with the Global

Alliance for Cultural Diversity and the International Network for Cultural Diversity, partnership programmes can be established between regions to strengthen viable cultural industries and foster arts management and exchanges.

d. National museums

Although national museums focus on the various facets of national culture, sections or departments devoted to multicultural aspects and issues can be very useful to inform the public at large about the contents and purpose of intercultural dialogue. Temporary and itinerary exhibitions can fulfil a similar role. The topics to be selected could be: history and sociology; history of science and contribution of different civilizations to science advancement; history of arts, etc.

e. Training and retraining of staff in charge of cultural development

It is advisable and even necessary to introduce cultural elements and information about shared values into the training and retraining programmes of staff in charge of cultural development, so as to enable them to tackle intercultural issues. This kind of action would also apply to the training of religions leaders and mediators.

5. Information and Communication

Since the mass media play a key role in shaping public opinion, they have great potential to facilitate the dialogue among cultures and civilizations by expanding the public's knowledge about cultural, ethnic, social and religious communities. This can be done at all levels and in all media, from news over feature stories to fiction and cartoons. All levels mean that international, regional, national and local media can play an active role in the dialogue context.

In developing countries, radio is still the most efficient media to help initiate and develop dialogue, such as through the use of live round-table or panel discussions with open lines for callers. Radio can reach the isolated, and often excluded, through community radio stations.

The internet offers individuals the opportunity to easily communicate with members of other cultural and social groups irrespective of national or other borders. These new forms of media contribute greatly to increased, diversified and decentralised information flows. Linguistic variety in terms of internet content, better, cheaper and possibly automated translation services, along with a greater emphasis on foreign

language education, will help the language barrier to a successful dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

a. Addressing ignorances, stereotypes and prejudices in the media

This should be an objective of training and retraining of journalists, as well as an obligation in performing their daily work. In addition to short- and medium-term measures, long-term planning can deal with twinning of journalists, editors and media institutions from different cultural regions.

b. Using images in the public space to struggle against stereotypes

c. Intercultural competencies in the training of journalists and media professionals

A set of intercultural competencies, to be specified at the conference, could be instilled in new generations of journalists. This is a long-term action that could be illustrated through specific projects in selected schools of journalism, belonging to different cultural regions and working in partnership.

In view of the range and outreach of satellite broadcasting, dialogue among cultures and peoples can also be promoted through dedicated TV programmes and live meetings between children, youth and members of civil society associations worldwide with the aim of exchanging viewpoints on issues related to their daily pre-occupations.

In line with the Declaration of Principles and Action Plan issued by the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva 2003, practical measures should be developed to help overcome the digital divide through digital solidarity, promoting cultural diversity and cooperation in this field.

The setting up, at the regional and international levels, of networks between media and communication personalities aimed at developing mutual understanding and respect.

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SHARED WISDOM AND RELATIONS WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS

RELATIONS WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS

INTRODUCTION

The Church exists to offer worship; to make known, by deed as well as word, the love of God in His Son Jesus Christ and, through the Holy Spirit, to draw people into a loving and ever deepening relationship with God and one another. The Church strengthens us to work for a world in which all human beings flourish physically, emotionally and spiritually, and in which the environment is cared for. Relations with people of other faiths are relevant both to the Church's concern for a society and a world in which all human beings flourish and for its calling to draw people into a loving relationship with God.

Since the Second World War, Britain has become an increasingly multi-racial and multi-faith society. Those with whom we work, who look after us in hospital or who live nearby may belong to a religion other than Christianity. If ours is to be harmonious society, we need to get to know and to respect the beliefs and practices of our fellow citizens who belong to other faiths and ways of life. This is likely to be an exciting and worthwhile experience, although it may also be demanding and disturbing.

Equally, if religion is not to be misused and become a cause of division in our world society, we need to overcome past prejudices and misunderstandings. Increasingly, members of many faiths are working together for peace, the defence of human rights, the relief of poverty and the protection of the environment. Indeed, there are those who believe that the shared witness of people of all faiths to ethical

and spiritual values is so vital to the future of our world, that they have coined the phrase 'dialogue or die'.

Often our knowledge of people of other faiths is based on ignorance and prejudice and their knowledge of Christianity may be as distorted. This is one reason why the relationship between religions has often been marked by hostility and persecution, as it still is in some parts of the world today, where religious differences embitter existing enmity. Further, many people believe passionately in the truth of their own religion and find rival claims to truth to be threatening.

Indeed some Christians have found the claims and practices of some other religions disturbing, but many Christians have found that making friends with people of other faiths and learning about their beliefs and practices has brought great enrichment to their lives and both deepened and broadened their own Christian commitment.

In this Document, we give a brief overview of the main theological considerations and indicate some practical matters of particular importance, as well as providing a list of useful addresses and books for those who wish to pursue these concerns.

It is difficult to estimate exactly how many people belong to other faith communities in Britain. The community figures given in Religions in the UK are:

Baha'is	6,000
Buddhists	30,000-130,000
Christians	40,000,000
Hindus	400,000-550,000
Jains	25,000-30,000
Jews	300,000
Muslims	1,000,000-1,5000,000
Sikhs	350,000-500,000
Zoroastrians	5,000-10,0002.

GUIDELINES ON DIALOGUE

As we get to know people of another faith, we may find helpful four guidelines suggested in 1981 by the British Council of Churches.

(i) Dialogue begins when people meet each other Jesus reaffirmed the command to love one's neighbour as oneself. In many parts of Britain, it is now quite likely that one's neighbour will belong to another religion. In this Diocese there are Muslim, Sikh, Hindu

and Jewish communities, as well as a number of Buddhists, Baha'is and members of newer religious movements.

Loving our neighbours of another faith means first of all talking to or getting to know them as people. Such a meeting may be at work or school or college or at a neighbourhood event. It may be as part of the programme of a local interfaith group.

(ii) Dialogue depends upon mutual understanding and mutual trust. As we talk to a person of another religion, some of our prejudices, fears and misconceptions may be faced, challenged or dispelled. Many Christians in Britain are still ignorant about the beliefs and practices of adherents of the world's religions.

Ignorance has often been a cause of prejudice and persecution. It is clear that anti-Jewish teaching by the Churches has been one of the causes of Jewish sufferings through the centuries. Muslims still recall the cruelty of the crusades. Even today, religious differences embitter the conflicts in the Holy Land, Former Yugoslavia, Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka. In our society, discrimination exists and members of other faiths are not always encouraged to feel at home in 'Christian England'. It is tempting to compare the best practice in our own religion with the worst in another religion.

There are now many books available about the religions of the world. Various courses of study are also provided. Even so, we urge local churches, perhaps at a Deanery level, to arrange for Christians to learn about other religions and, where possible, to meet with members of other faiths.

(iii) Dialogue makes it possible to share in service to the community. As members of different faiths get to know each other, there are projects on which they can work together—perhaps to protect the environment, or to support a hospice or to pray for peace. Common concern for social issues is also one of the reasons to bring together people of different religions at a national and international level.

(iv) Dialogue becomes the medium of authentic witness. At some point, as trust and friendship grows, it is likely that the conversation will turn to questions of religious belief. There will be some matters on which there may be agreement and some on which there is difference of opinion. Conversation or dialogue can be a chance really to listen and perhaps to resolve misunderstanding and to see things from another point of view. Listening is a witness to authentic Christian love and belief.

Although there is a place for debate, argument about religious matters is nearly always counter-productive. A personal sharing of our experience of God's love in Christ, however, will usually be listened to attentively.

Just as most Christians dislike high pressure doorstep attempts to get them to change their beliefs, so most members of other faiths resent attempts to convert them, especially if they feel pressurized. It is God who leads men and women to the truth.

THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Lord of Life

As monotheists, Christians believe there is One God who is the Creator of all that exists and recognise that God loves all people. Many Christians believe that in other religions people seek and find God. The *Bible* also suggests that God is the Lord of History and that, therefore other religions have a place in God's purposes. Our understanding of God is, however, different in important ways.

For Christians, God is most fully revealed in Jesus Christ – in his life and ministry, death and resurrection. Christians believe that the Word, God's only Son, has made the Father known and that Jesus is the Saviour of the world. Christians will evaluate the claims of other faiths in the light of Christ.

The Holy Spirit, as the 'Lord and giver of life' is always ahead of the church working in the world to bring love, truth and understanding to every part of the world, so that wherever love, truth and understanding are to be found in other faith communities, we can see this as evidence of the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Reflection

Those Christians who have entered into dialogue with members of another faith nearly always say that this has both deepened and broadened their faith in Christ. Such dialogue emphasises the importance of Christians having a clear understanding of their own faith, a trust in Christ and the confidence to witness to him. Christians also need some understanding of the beliefs and practices of members of other faiths.

At times in dialogue, people may find they have much on which they agree, at other times there may be sharp disagreements – even when there is real love between the partners in dialogue. This reflects the ambiguity of the relation of one religion to another and the various

attempts, none wholly satisfactory, which scholars have made to explain these relationships. Within the Church there will be those who emphasise the calling to proclaim Christ as Saviour and others who see their vocation, as 'good neighbours', slowly to build up trust and understanding. The situations in which Christians meet and talk with people of other faith are very varied – whether it be informal conversation in every day life or the more formal setting of a meeting for inter-religious dialogue. The character of the dialogue will also depend upon who is taking part and to which religion and branch of that religion they belong.

Attempts have been made to label different approaches – for example as 'exclusive', 'inclusive' and 'pluralist' – but these often seem artificial and few people feel they quite fit the labels. It is perhaps too early to attempt a definitive statement of the relationship of Christianity to the world religions and we need first to listen more carefully to the varied experiences in this field of our fellow Christians.

Mission

Christians have sometimes thought of mission in too narrow a sense. The primary mission is God's initiative to offer fullness of life to a divided and suffering world.

At the start of his ministry, Luke says that Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah the words:

'The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed meto preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
And recovery of sight for the blind,
To release the oppressed,
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' (Luke 4, 18-19)

In reply to John the Baptist's disciples' enquiry whether he was 'the one who was to come', Jesus said, 'Go back and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor' (Luke 7,22).

Luke ends his gospel with the Risen Christ saying to his disciples 'repentance and forgiveness will be preached in my name to all nations' (Luke 24:47, cp Matthew 28, 16-20). Christians are called to share this mission.

The Church should try to hold together the preaching of the Gospel, the service of the needy and the transformation of society. The Anglican communion has identified Five marks or Strands of Mission, which have been widely discussed in the diocese. They are:

To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom.
To teach, baptise and nurture new believers;
To respond to human need by loving service.
To seek to transform unjust structure of society.
To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to renew the life of the earth.

In seeking to fulfil the last three strands of mission, many Christians are happy to work with people of good will of another faith or no faith. Many Christians witness by their actions and their care for others.

Proclamation of the Good News remains the central strand of the Church's mission, but Christians are not alone in wishing to share their faith with other people. Many of the world's major religious traditions have within them a missionary impetus. This 'derives from a conviction of their universal relevance and a consequent desire to share them with the opportunity for "enlightenment" or "salvation" or to invite others to adopt the same values and to follow a similar pattern of life', as is recognised in a statement agreed by the Interfaith Network of the United Kingdom on Mission, Dialogue and Inter-religious Encounter.

Sadly, some forms of mission in several religions—often labelled 'proselytism'—have been insensitive and even aggressive. The statement of the Interfaith Network itself recognises that 'certain practices are objectionable in any missionary context… These are practices which involve unethical, emotional or intellectual manipulation of people who are vulnerable because of age, illness, isolation or social situation.

'Some members of other faiths, especially Jewish people, complain that they have been the targets of such missionary activity by Christians. In some parts of the world, there are memories too of 'Christian imperialism'. Christians have also to be aware that to a person of another faith recently settled in this country, the Christian religion can seem very dominant – much more so than it appears to faithful Christians who are aware of the widespread secularism in British society.

Christians, while witnessing to Christ among people of other faiths, need to do so in a manner consistent with the love of Christ with full respect for the sensitivities and conscience of the other. Many of those

who have been most involved in dialogue and community action are very aware of these sensitivities and of the slow and patient work required to build real trust between people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. They may, therefore, appear to have muted the proclamation of the Gospel. Others who have been more intensely evangelistic need to be more aware of these sensitivities. There is room for more dialogue between Christians who adopt different approaches and a recognition of the need to seek the Spirit's guidance on the pattern of mission appropriate to particular situations.

PRACTICAL MATTERS

The increasingly multi-faith character of our society affects many people in their daily life. Community workers, youth workers, members of the police and other public services will meet members of several different faith communities. Christians involved in many areas of work will perform a useful service if they are able to encourage greater sensitivity to multi-faith issues amongst their colleagues.

(a) Faith and Work: The workplace in this country is multi-faith and economic activity affects us all whatever our faith and tradition. Justice demands that we take this seriously and ensure that people of all faith traditions are enabled to make their full contribution to the life of our society. Respect for different cultural and religious practices is very important. Key issues are:

Holidays and Festivals

People of other faiths are usually obliged to take Christmas and Easter as holidays but when they want time off for festivals such as Eid or Diwali, if they are granted leave, it has to be taken from their annual leave.

Dress

The Hijab or head scarf required for devout Muslim women can cause problems in some places. Likewise the turban of Sikh men.

Muslim Prayers

Muslims are required to pray five times daily with the time varying over the year according to the time of sunrise and sunset. There is some flexibility over the timing which can allow for the prayers to be said during rest breaks but a suitable room needs to be provided where smoking or consumption of alcohol does not take place. Separate facilities for men and women to perform the ablutions before prayer are needed.

Education and Skills

Members of other faith communities are often among the most disadvantaged in education and training. This is a source of great resentment. If young people are to grow up as responsible citizens they must feel that they are valued and their skills wanted.

Discrimination

This is still prevalent in the workplace. Religious discrimination is not a criminal offence in this country, although it is in Northern Ireland. Principles to promote Race Equality in Employment, known, after the Bishops of Croydon and Liverpool, as the Wood Sheppard Principles, are available from the Board of Social Responsibility and Industrial Mission.

Changing Patterns of Work : Contract or Covenant?

Judaism has a wealth of teaching on economic activity. It is a means to an end, not an end in itself. The purpose of economic activity is to provide for the family and the study of Torah. There is much in the concept of Covenant which challenges our present day contract culture. Covenant cannot be understood outside the care of both the community, the land and the well-being of future generations. This is a crucial area of dialogue as we consider the health of our society and our future together.

(b) Interfaith Marriages: As our society becomes more multi-faith, it is natural that there will be a growing number of marriages in which husband and wife belong to different religions.

Clergy, if they have not thought about this, may be unprepared to respond to a request from a member of the parish who wishes to marry a member of another Faith, in the local church. There are legal, theological and pastoral considerations.

Legally, anyone resident in the parish who does not have a partner of a previous marriage alive is entitled to be married in their parish church, but only according 'to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England'. This would mean, for example, that a Muslim or a Jew taking part would be expected to promise in the name of the Trinity. Some clergy have not insisted on this, but the legality of such an omission is questionable. The couple also need to be aware that if one party is a foreign national it is necessary to ensure that the marriage will be accepted as a valid marriage in the country of origin of the foreign national.

Even if a 'mixed' marriage is legal, members of the family of the partner who is not a Christian may have hesitations about a church service. Each case has to be dealt with individually. Special prayers after a civil ceremony may be more appropriate and should be considered during marriage preparation.

Theologically, some would argue that the Christian understanding of marriage is rooted in creation. Marriage is therefore available to all men and women, regardless of faith, and it may be appropriate to celebrate in church that which God offers us all. Others would question whether all people share the Christian understanding that marriage is intended to be a life-long, loving partnership, which is prefigured by Christ's relationship with the Church.

Pastoral concerns are not limited to what happens on the wedding day. Relatives and faith communities may be unsympathetic to a 'mixed' marriage and the couple need to be helped to consider these pressures. They should also be encouraged to think about how they would bring up children. To which faith would the child belong—to both or to neither? In a Christian-Jewish marriage, for example, would a boy be baptized or circumcised or would a special service of thanksgiving and naming be arranged?

Whilst 'mixed' marriages may encounter particular tensions, many are successful and fulfilled. Too often couples feel they meet with little sympathy or understanding from religious officials.

There are two Occasional Papers from the Board of Mission:

(i) The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches. £2.50, by post £2.90.

(ii) Guidelines for the Celebration of Mixed-Faith Marriages in Church. £1.00, by post £1.30.

(c) Interfaith Prayer: There is a growing number of occasions when people of different faiths may wish to pray together. Some occasions may be informal, perhaps with a friend who is ill; other occasions will be personal at a wedding or funeral; other times will be more public, perhaps at a service for United Nations Day or Remembrance Day. At a Parade Service, it needs to be remembered that some of the Scouts and Guides may belong to religions other than Christianity.

(i) Inviting guests of another faith to a Christian service. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the guests can follow the service. Some times a member of another faith may be asked to read or speak.

(ii) Visiting another place of worship as a guest. Sensitivity should be shown to the customs of the worshippers, for example removing shoes or covering the head wherever required.

(iii) Occasions when members of different faiths each in turn read from their scriptures or offer prayers. These occasions are sometime described as 'multi-religious serial worship' or as 'being together to pray'.

(iv) Services planned as a unity in which all the participants are invited to join in some prayers or affirmations. These services are sometimes described as 'united interfaith services' or as 'praying together'.

Both iii and iv require careful preparation, especially to ensure that all participants are happy with what has been arranged. Buddhists may be uneasy with theistic references. A social time afterwards is valuable. There are differences of opinion about whether a place of worship or a secular building is the most appropriate venue. There are also differences in the best way to describe such occasions. Some people avoid the term 'worship' or 'service' and speak about 'celebration' or 'act of witness'.

Some Christians believe that occasional carefully prepared times, when people of different faiths join together in prayer, witness to the reality of the Divine in a secular culture and are an affirmation of our God-given common humanity. Others fear that such occasions may blur the distinctive Christian witness to Jesus Christ as Saviour of the World. Many of these issues are discussed in: Multi-Faith Worship? £3.50 plus postage from Church House Bookshop.

(d) Use of Church Buildings: It is a practice of most faith communities to worship together regularly. With the growth of other faith communities in this country, it is only to be expected that their need for places of worship will grow. While some, especially in cities with large concentrations of the minority communities, were able to build their own temples, gurudwaras, mosques and so forth, others often looked to the local churches to help them with their worship and related needs such as weddings, perhaps by the hire of church halls.

The response of the churches has been varied; in the early days it generally tended to be negative. Indeed, it was hurtful and incomprehensible to the minority communities why they were denied the use of a hall for a wedding reception while dog training and

bingo were considered perfectly acceptable uses of the building. Nowadays the other faith communities are more able to build their own worship centres, and the response of churches on the whole has become less negative. Nevertheless, the question is still important to many churches and there is a genuine feeling amongst many that allowing other faiths to worship in any Christian building is a denial of Christianity and the unique revelation of God in Jesus. This feeling is often particularly strong if it is suggested that a redundant church might be sold to a community of another faith. Yet, if Christians fail to recognise and respond to the spiritual needs of members of other faiths, this will produce alienation and be a deterrent to interfaith dialogue. Their perception of Christians' generosity might, however, well be their first step towards an understanding of the Christian faith and be seen as an example of our respect for religious freedom.

The General Synod Board of Mission has produced a very helpful booklet, Communities and Buildings, Church of England Premises and Other Faiths, Church House Publishing, 1996, which can be of great value to all those who have to make decisions of this nature.

(e) Religious Education in LEA Schools in England and Wales: Our education system is unusual in Europe in that, unlike most other systems which are wholly secular in approach, the British system includes two significant religious demands. The first is that each child should attend a daily act of collective worship, and the second is that religious education (RE) should be part of the taught syllabus. The terms on which all of this is done are laid down in the 1988 Education Act, and, for Church Schools, in the Trust Deeds which date from their foundation.

It is important that collective worship and RE are not confused—though there may be some links between the two. Religious Education is a curriculum subject, which like any other, can be examined at GCSE and A level. It is learned through question and inquiry, and through a properly planned programme which makes sure that pupils gain appropriate knowledge for their ages and abilities. Schools need to give RE about 5% of curriculum time, which is about an hour a week, though when RE is an examination subject more time is given. The content of RE is laid down by law for County and Church Controlled Schools, through the local Agreed Syllabus. Pupils are to study Christianity as the historic faith of this country, and those world faiths that are present in Great Britain. In practice this means the five historic faiths of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism. These are

not necessarily taught all at once, and often pupils will learn about Christianity alongside two other faiths. RE asks 'What can we learn about and from each faith and its community?' It is not part of an RE teacher's job to teach the faith itself. Respecting each pupil and helping them to develop their own view of life is an underlying aim. In 1970 a Church of England Report on RE said, 'If the teacher (of RE) is to press for any conversion, it is conversion from a shallow and unreflective attitude to life. If he is to press for commitment, it is commitment to the religious quest, to that search for meaning, purpose and value which is open to all'.

The position for Church-aided Schools, both Anglican and Roman Catholic is different, as the law does not require them to follow the Agreed Syllabus. For Anglicans, the Bishop of Oxford has advised schools that they must be clear in their commitment to teach Christianity, and the Diocese has defined those areas of knowledge that need to be covered in the Christian Faith. But church schools are also advised to teach pupils about other world faiths as well. Roman Catholic schools have a similar position. If this was not done, pupils in church schools would grow up without a real knowledge of the multifaith world we live in, nor would they be able to understand their neighbours of a different faith.

(f) 'Collective Worship' in LEA Schools: Worship in county schools is required by law to be 'of a broadly Christian character', though there are arrangements for this to be different in areas where there are numbers of pupils from other faiths. Most schools make this worship or assembly time, a period for quiet reflection, with a thought for the day, perhaps drawn from Christianity or one of the other faiths. At its best (and many schools do this well) this is a space for quiet where teachers and pupils look beyond themselves, in a school day that is often too rushed and busy. In practice, many county schools find the requirement for daily worship very hard, partly because there are not enough staff-members with skill to lead worship, and partly because of constraints of time and space.

In addition, the requirements of 'worship' as such can pose difficulties, particularly for schools with pupils drawn from a diversity of backgrounds.

Church schools often have less difficulty, mostly because worship is understood to be an important part of daily life, and because the central values that underpin the life of a church school have their source in worship. The Diocese encourages its schools to respect the

faith commitment of each child, whatever their faith background. Interestingly, in many areas where there are numbers of pupils from other faiths, church schools are often popular with these families. It is not unusual to find church schools with large numbers (sometimes a majority) of pupils from other faiths. The fact that very few parents take up their option to withdraw children from worship is a tribute to the careful handling of this by teachers. These multi-faith church schools are good examples of the way children can learn to live and worship side-by-side, in full recognition of each other's religious difference.

(g) Health Concerns: Those involved in health care and social work may have a particular need to appreciate the beliefs and practices of members of other faiths. The Patient's Charter says that 'all health services should make provision so that proper personal consideration is shown to you, for example by ensuring that your privacy, dignity and religious and cultural beliefs are respected'.

Sensitivity will include awareness that some people's familiarity with English is limited and that they may need the help of an interpreter. Some women may be reluctant to discuss personal matters with a man or be seen by a male doctor unless a close relative is present. Dietary requirements need careful consideration, as well as, in some religions, rules for fasting. Patients may want opportunities to observe religious rituals and festivals.

Particular attention should be given to customs of faith communities in the care of dying patients and their relatives. In many traditions, there are also special last rites after death. The question of a post-mortem or the donation of organs needs to be handled with care. Undertakers also need to be aware of these concerns.There are a number of helpful publications and those with management responsibilities in health work and social care should ensure that their colleagues have easy access to relevant information.

World Faiths in Hospital is a useful quick guide. Chaplaincy Dept., The St. Helier NHS Trust, Wrythe Lane, Carshalton, Surrey. SM5 1AA (0181 296 2306). Our Ministry and Other Faiths: A Booklet for Hospital Chaplains—Hospital Chaplains Council, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ.

(h) Prisons: The Prison Service is committed to giving prisoners the freedom to exercise their religion, whatever it may be, during a custodial sentence. Under the Prison Act, the chaplain of any prison must be an ordained minister of the Established Church but there has always been, under the Act, the facility to appoint ministers to serve

minority groups. All prisons nowadays have to appoint a range of Visiting Ministers to meet the needs of all religious groups, and such people visit the prison either regularly, or as need arises, depending on the number of men or women registered in that particular religion.

Matters of diet are important, and prison kitchens have to be able to provide for those whose faith proscribes certain kinds of food. Religious festivals are observed, and prisons are informed of the major festivals each year on which those registered in each of the major religions should not be required to work.

Prisoners of other faiths may meet together for worship if they wish to do so. Finding space in the older prisons is often a problem, and it may be that a class room or grouproom is the best that can be provided. It is not usually appropriate to use the Christian chapel (unless it can be in some way divided up) as the presence of Christian artefacts makes this difficult. In all modern prisons, a good room of appropriate size is provided within a chaplaincy centre for the members of other faiths to gather together for worship and instruction.

All requirements for the observance of other faiths—dress, diet, worship needs and religious festivals—are found in the Directory and Guide on Religious Practices in H.M. Prison Service. Further information is available from the Assistant Chaplain General, Room 717, Abel House, John Islip Street, London. SW1P 4LH.

Other Issues

Many other topics could be discussed. Sensitivity to our multi-ethnic society can be shown in the choice of menus for school dinners. Libraries should ensure a selection of books, relevant to our varied multi-lingual society, especially in the section for children. In a northern town, the public swimming-baths have special sessions for Muslim women. Some university chaplaincy centres provide facilities for students of all religions. Some local radio stations ensure that members of all faiths contribute to the religious programmes.

Christians, both by challenging false stereotypes and by their sensitivity to the concerns of people of other faiths, can do much to encourage understanding and co-operation in our wider society.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Faith Communities in the Oxford Diocese

There are Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, Buddhist and other faith communities in the Oxford Diocese. There are, for example, Hindu

temples in Slough and at Middleton Stoney. There are synagogues in Oxford, Reading, Maidenhead and Milton Keynes. There are mosques at Oxford, Milton Keynes, Maidenhead, High Wycombe, Reading and Slough. There are Sikh Gurudwaras in Slough, Maidenhead, High Wycombe and Reading. There is a Buddhist Peace Pagoda in Milton Keynes and a Temple at Donnington, near Newbury. The Brahma Kumaris Global Retreat Centre is at Nuneham Park, near Oxford.

SHARED WISDOM

GROWING GRASSROOTS INTERFAITH RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

There will be no peace among nations until there is peace among religions. And there will *be no peace among religions until there is dialogue among religions* wrote Hans Küng, 1993 in *Shared Wisdom*, a book about engendering friendship among strangers, comes from an inter-religious team of people in Marin County, California, just across the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco.

Inspired by a growing global grassroots interfaith movement, we believe the ability to nurture authentic friendship among strangers from different religious backgrounds has become an important survival skill for the human family in the twenty-first century. We are *not* interested in creating a new religion, proselytising, or becoming a political movement. But we share a profound commitment to knowing each other and collaborating on projects important to us all.

- We think dialogue and relationship are critical in communities, large or small, that wish to stay civil, much less vital and robust.
- The multi-religious dialogue we envision is open to all points of view, theistic and atheistic, spiritual and material, rational and imaginative.
- We treat each other with mutual respect.
- And we hope that the friendship we learn *between* traditions will be used for reconciling bridge-building *within* traditions when we find ourselves divided.

Shared Wisdom explores the unique religious diversity we live in today. It surveys several post-World War II documents that have helped shape our thinking about dialogue and relationship. You'll find suggestions about studying the material and getting acquainted with neighbours from different traditions and, in chapter 5, a provocative

chart for developing dialogue skills by Professor Patrice Brodeur. The book ends with an annotated list of resources and links.

Shared Wisdom was conceived when a group of Mill Valley congregations sponsored a course in world religions taught by Philip Novak of Dominican University in San Rafael. People enjoyed the class thoroughly and wanted more, something taking them the next step, offering opportunities to meet and get to know neighbours from as many different traditions as possible. A planning group formed.

Dominican University, the International Association of Sufism, and the Marin Interfaith Council all became sponsors, and the Interfaith Center at the Presidio was brought in to help organise and support a new kind of project. A course titled "Waking Up in the New Religious America – Building Bridges of Interfaith Understanding" was planned, taught by Paul Chaffee, executive director at the Interfaith Center, who wrote this text with help from an editorial team drawn from the planning group. A concluding conference is planned for January 2005. *Shared Wisdom* was written for anyone interested in developing healthy relations among different faith families. It is a resource for the Marin County course and conference, and we hope it inspires similar ventures everywhere.

The planning group, hoping to engage as many as possible in Marin's religious community, decided to send a copy of the book to each congregation in the county to use as it wishes, including making copies. The work at hand, though, need not wait a moment. To begin, all you need is an hour or two of your time spent with an acquaintance from a different faith. Find a quiet, comfortable place, have a cup of tea or a meal or a walk in the park, and explore the issues below.

As you begin your dialogue, remember some of us grew up in highly religious families; other families are happy to be free of religious language and institution. Most of us, regardless of family and institution, have deep spiritual roots, but they can be defined and reembodied in thousands of different ways. The idea here is to share with each other what we find particularly valuable in our own religious/spiritual backgrounds, the values forged, the truth discovered, and the journey that follows.

- *Please tell me about your spiritual, religious tradition, how it influenced you and what you* found most valuable about it, then and today.
- *How does your religious background approach the issues of peace-making and 'healing* the world'? Can you tell me a story about

witnessing your community stand up for justice and peace in a way that made you proud? Or a story about reconciliation and conflict within your faith family or close friends?

The reward for starting up (especially if the two of you do yourselves the favour of finding the time and place to be comfortable and relaxed about the conversation) can barely if ever be completely explained. You'll understand as soon as you get there.

Why Meeting My Neighbor the Stranger is Important for Our Mutual Survival

Who is my neighbor? The question resonates back through the centuries in every religious tradition. But an intense new immediacy attends the question today, in what Harvard professor Diana Eck calls "a new religious America." In less than half a century, the demographics of our nation's neighborhoods—large and small, urban and rural—have generated a startling religious diversity.

On a bus, in a classroom, at work, buying groceries, at the ballpark, most of us in this country continue to rub shoulders with Catholics, Jews, Protestants, and the unaffiliated. But the 20th century witnessed a massive shift in this country, particularly when immigration law was reformed in 1965 to end racial discrimination against certain groups. Today, the American family has been joined by significant numbers of Buddhists, Confucians, Hindus, Jains, Muslims, Sikhs, Taoists, and Zoroastrians. These traditions all found their first public forum in this country at the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions; now their temples, restaurants, and cultural festivals have become part of our lives. Simultaneously, newer religions are proliferating, bringing us Latter Day Saints, Unitarian Universalists, Baha'i's, and the Brahma Kumaris, to name but a few. Equally important is growing recognition and respect for dozens of earth-based, indigenous traditions, communities that fall under such mantles as American Indian, Neo-Pagan and Shinto.

The amazing religious landscape emerging is unprecedented. But the core issue facing religious communities learning to live together goes back at least to the 1840s, when interfaith peace societies started sprouting up here and abroad, all focussed on ending war. Approximately 425 peace groups around the world were active in 1900, largely people of faith who had survived the bloodiest of all centuries and wanted a change. In February 1914, Andrew Carnegie invited Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant leaders to his home and offered to fund an interfaith effort to abolish war. Their initial conference was

scheduled that September in Germany. The day it convened World War I was declared, and 24 hours later, after sharing prayers, the participants hurried home.

Today, in a world more bloodied than ever, not all is bleak. Peace studies and conflict resolution theory are in the second or third generation of a renaissance, starting with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Leading up to the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions (commemorating the 1893 gathering), Catholic theologian Hans Küng suggested that until religions make peace, nations will be at war, and until religions are in dialogue, they will not be at peace with each other. The 8,000 who went to the 1993 Parliament provided an enthusiastic choir for Professor Küng's notions about inter-religious dialogue, but the rest of the world paid scant attention.

Little changes started taking place on their own, though, across the land. Starting in the early 1990s, ecumenical groups (Christians from different denominations) increasingly have moved to interfaith membership. Chaplains in hospitals, universities, and the military learn on the job from day one about ministry to multi-religious constituencies. Directors of neighborhood food programmes, emergency housing, and local/global crisis response efforts have become savvy about increasing their capacity to meet goals by welcoming participation from all faith families. But it took September 11, 2001,—to wake the world up to the scope and import of Dr. Küng's challenge.

Several Sundays after that historic tragedy, 30 Muslims showed up on the doorstep of First Congregational United Church of Christ in San Jose as worship was about to begin. "We are Muslims," they explained. "Are we welcome?" They were welcomed in.

After worship, the Muslims said, "We are your neighbours, and we don't know you. We think we should know each other." From that first conversation flowed a series of collaborative events.

The raw courage of the Muslims walking into an unknown worship environment within weeks of 9-11, and the startled Christians' ability to respond openly and in friendship, exemplifies the essence of what is required for interfaith relationship building. Demonizing people behind their backs is so much easier than walking across the street and introducing yourself. But in neighborhoods everywhere, people—a few here, a few there—are putting shyness and fear of the unknown aside, and starting their introductions.

Preparing to Meet 'the Religious Other'

Before introducing yourself to 'the religious other,' a few simple answers to several persistent, fearful questions (which we won't take time to repeat) might be helpful:

- Interfaith relationships tend to be about friendship, cooperation, and collaboration around shared stories, values, and goals—not about creating a new religion or a lowest common religious denominator.
- Healthy interfaith relationships are never about taking away your faith and practice. People who most actively pursue interfaith dialogue and cooperation, including leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and the Dalai Lama, typically report that interfaith dialogue enriches rather than diminishes the faith they brought to the table. One's own personal faith, far from being lost or diluted, is deepened by the experience.
- Many religions seek to convert outsiders to their tradition, an attitude that deserves respect. Proselytising is inappropriate, though, at interfaith events where developing friendship and mutual respect is the goal.
- Very few in 'the interfaith movement' are relativists, people suggesting that, 'after all, all religions are mostly the same anyway.' On the other hand, interfaith activists do tend to believe that human beings have a variety of authentic ways to believe, practice and build a relationship with what Abrahamic religions call God, and ancient Hindu saints (not wanting to delimit divinity with their definitions) called 'neither this, nor that.'

Most religions have a minority of followers who claim to own the 'exclusive' truth—and they are frequently opposed by those who see the goodness, beauty, and truth in different religious/spiritual approaches. The 2003 Gallup Religious Tolerance Index suggested that in this country, 17 percent believe they alone know what is true and are labeled isolated or exclusivist. By comparison, 46 percent are labeled tolerant, or "sort of' inclusive. That leaves 37 percent who are called integrated or pluralistic, people who tend to be religiously involved as well as interested in others.

These figures should allay the fears which most of us have harbored at some point, that "those folks over there are taking over everything." Diversity reigns and is not going away, so we need creative ways to build relationship. The din between pluralists and exclusivists, for

instance, can get nasty and judgmental, but it doesn't need to be that way. Most if not all religions propound some version of the Golden Rule; the version in your tradition is your best starting point for preparing to meet the religious other. Quietly embodying love gives everyone a huge additional advantage. This applies equally to fundamentalists and progressives, old-timers and newcomers, friends and strangers.

Whatever your own truth claims, whatever attitude —humble or assertive—you take towards your truth, interfaith dialogue is enhanced with a few ground rules:

- Offer everyone the same respect and dignity you hope to receive.
- Listen to the other person with enough care to begin to discern the "positive core," the life-giving energy, in his or her faith.
- Speak from the heart, not to make a point but to build understanding and relationship.
- Remember that many traditions stay away from alcohol and meat; and many worship on a day other than Sunday, making time sensitivity important when planning shared activities.

The issue of sharing ritual and worship evokes some additional protocol:

- When praying, leading meditation, or otherwise contributing to interfaith worship, speak in your own language and idiom, just as others will when they come to the podium.
- When sharing spiritual practices, offer those attending three options—to actually participate if and when appropriate, to simply observe, or to leave and take some time out. Shared practice should never be coerced.

These guidelines reduce potential missteps. For several decades, the World Council of Churches has worked on more elaborate interfaith guidelines, and in recent years a number of denominations and nonprofits have developed their own. All are good tools for learning to treat each other well.

Similarly, the art of graceful hosting, music and the arts, and good food almost always improve relationship building. Sacred space can be fully enjoyed by interfaith groups when all present feel respected, safe, and comfortable enough to participate. Providing one another hospitality in such a setting is a small but tangible step toward creating a world of sustained peace.

Engaging Ways to Build Grassroots Interfaith Relations

In church, synagogue, mosque, coven, sanga, or gurdwara, clergy and lay leaders know full well how to design worship, create programmes, give life to religious education curricula, and organise service projects. In spite of this expertise and experience, though, figuring out what to do following interfaith introductions can be awkward. As an old-timer said, "So you've had a beautiful multi-faith Thanksgiving service, but then what are you meant to do?!"

The first person with his or her hand up usually says, "Let's find out what we all agree on, the things that make us alike." People well-read in religious studies can offer fascinating insights into this subject, but the approach is strewn with the dangers of over-simplification and distortion. Simplistic comparisons reduce religious experience—one of the most precious particularities of human experience—to a common denominator.

The one arena where studying religious convergence is useful and important is ethics. As noted above, the Golden Rule gives us a shared starting point. From there, comparing and contrasting what we teach about public and private ethics, about justice, compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation and peace, about walking the talk, is fascinating and edifying, a huge opportunity for interfaith dialogue. Lessons for sustaining the human family peacefully start to emerge.

Download from the Web, for instance, *Towards a Global Ethic—An Initial Declaration*. It is a 10-page document that 200 religious leaders signed at the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions that we will be examining in chapter 5. A cry from the heart over the violence of the world, the declaration suggests that we can rediscover the sources of peace-making within each of our particular traditions. By itself, this initial declaration provides a rich syllabus for any religious education project. It can be used within your own community but is so much more interesting when half of those in the room are from a different faith.

A caveat: Issues weighted with political controversy and polarised opinions need to be set on the shelf while people become friends, or dialogue can degenerate into irresolvable acrimony. An example can make the distinction clear. Interfaith groups around the world are studying forgiveness from the perspective of different religions, with remarkable results. They succeed because mutual respect has been established and they stay focussed on the issue—forgiveness in each

of their traditions. If these conversations veer into an argument about who is right in the Israel-Palestine conflict, or the India-Pakistan conflict, a harsh debate is the best you can expect, and mutual demonising the worst. Can we ignore these conflicts? Of course not. But milk comes before solids, and friendship—real human connection where people have learned to appreciate each other—comes before tackling problems that have confounded the best and brightest for centuries.

Before taking on something as ambitious as the global ethic, you might want to implement a getting-to-know-you ice-breaker that creates friendship among people from different religions for no other reason than the satisfaction of doing so. The following sets of questions can be used in various contexts and formats. The most popular way to begin is one-on-one for 45 minutes to an hour, followed by people introducing each other in small groups. Initial interviews work best when the pairs don't know each other and come from different faiths, but even old friends from the same congregation can enjoy a rich conversation with these questions.

- Thank you for introducing yourself and telling me a little about yourself. Please tell me something about your religion and how you practice it day by day.
- What is most valuable and important to you about your spiritual life and faith family? Perhaps, you would share a story about a particularly meaningful religious experience.
- What does your tradition teach about how to treat strangers? Do you have hospitality traditions in your faith—stories or lore or community practices for welcoming the visitor and relating to your neighbours peacefully?
- Let's put aside for a moment the conflicts communities experience internally and with the world. Could you tell me of a time when you witnessed a situation that moved from conflict to reconciliation and became a positive influence for peace, a bridge-builder among strangers? How did it happen and what did you learn?
- If in 100 years the human race is able to create a sustainable peace among religions and nations, what do you think it would look like? What are some of the steps that might lead us toward that vision, and what part of that vision should we start working on here and now?

The secret ingredient in this interfaith introduction recipe is keeping the questions and discussion focussed on assets rather than deficits.

Reflect on what works best in your communities and relationships, rather than what doesn't work. When problems come up, they can be reframed as opportunities, challenging possibilities for doing better instead of roadblocks. The failure of dedicated international peacemakers trying for a century and a half *to abolish war* suggests that shifting the focus *to creating cultures of peace* is infinitely more practical, fruitful, and transforming. Positive little steps now, starting in our own backyards, will inspire others to become active.

The question sets above and many more were used in creating United Religions Initiative (URI), an international interfaith network chartered in 2000 and connecting 240 (and growing) local interfaith groups in 50 countries. Taking time for the questions, encouraging every participant to be a listener and a contributor, is a wonderful introduction to the joy of grassroots interfaith community.

The kind of interfaith relationships we've talked about seem modest but can be deeply satisfying. Once they begin, things may seem to return to normal, but if the relationships are nurtured, the 'neighborhood' gradually finds itself with new life, unexpected gifts, a renewed imagination, rich conversations, and the energy to participate in healing the world.

Sacred and Foundational Texts

Religious and spiritual traditions typically store their treasure – the narrative, wisdom, and values informing each faith family – in some sort of record. This documentation can come in the form of holy scripture, writing set aside, historically authorised in some way, revered, studied, and used in meditation and worship. Scripture is so important in Christianity, Judaism and Islam that they are frequently called "religions of the Book."

Orally transmitted stories take the place of authorised scripture in other traditions, particularly indigenous communities. Whether canonized or open-ended, the form and content of humankind's sacred words are manifold… poetry, songs, religious tales of every kind, history, ethics, all providing guidance, nourishment for believers and practitioners as well as interested outsiders.

Most followers in most traditions find their own sacred texts fully adequate for spiritual and communitarian concerns. Many are learning, though, what a pleasure it is to hear the sacred words of other traditions, particularly in ritual settings. Grassroots interfaith activity is sprouting up across the country, with communities sharing their stories and

scripture with each other for the first time, an experience humbling and empowering all at once. Over and over people who worried that the experience might be strange or threatening find themselves enriched when it happens.

If there is any limitation in these wonderful words that knit together the meaning of life for us, it might be that very few traditions mention the religious other in tones of appreciation or goodwill. When other religions are mentioned, it tends to be judgmental, without much room for mutual respect. *The Guru Granth Sahib*, the sacred text of Sikhs, is a book of devotional songs, and it includes Hindu and Muslim hymns in a display of spiritual magnanimity hard to imagine in other faiths. Sikhism is an exception to the rule. Most traditions until recently have done little to create or encourage a level playing field of mutual respect for inter-religious dialogue. But the tide is turning.

As noted above, Catholic theologian Hans Küng observed that *until religions make peace, the world will be at war, and that religions will not be in peace until they are in dialogue*. To inspire and inform the inter-religious dialogue Küng calls for, sacred texts by themselves don't suffice. We need a new literature, not more scripture but a series of foundational, shared documents holding up *the value of every human being and the importance of religions working together to heal the world*.

Let us hope a library accumulates around the care of the whole human family. The selections discussed below, at this point in time, seem foundational, critical texts for the care and sustainability of the human family.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

In 1948, the United Nations passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a *Magna Carta* for the whole human race. Human rights till then were defined, enforced, and evaluated nation by nation, with 'mind your own business' the international ethic of the day. But the opening clause to the 1948 Declaration proposed that the *"recognition of the inherent dignity of the equal and* inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world."

Some, like this writer, may have assumed as children that the ethic in the faith you grew up with –valuing every human being as an invaluable child of God – would be a high priority for everyone. You may have assumed that since the United States of America Constitution is grounded in the inalienable rights of *every* human being to life,

liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, that Americans would be supportive of inalienable rights for us all, in this country and everywhere else. Those turned out to be false assumptions.

To be sure, most religions have a high conception of human beings. But the horrors of the holocaust spurred the world's leadership to craft the 1948 Declaration. It passed the United National General Assembly as a resolution, and did not carry the force of international law. Yet it has become one of the 20th century's most significant documents, a bill of rights for all people, regardless of race, religion or nationality.

Ironically, in the family of nations, the United States, with its own shining Bill of Rights, has turned out to be one of the least enthusiastic about the UN Declaration, much less the implication that international law should enforce its values. The same cannot be said at the grassroots, where millions of Americans hunger with the rest of the world for an end to violence and poverty for all. More than half a century later, studying the Declaration is an excellent starting point in defining the kind of world we wish to create for our children and grandchildren.

Towards a Global Ethic—An Initial Declaration (1993)

A second document emerged from the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago, a centennial celebration of the 1893 gathering where Buddhist, Hindus, Muslims, and other religious minorities were given their first public forum in this country. Professor Küng, working with many others, drafted a text titled *Towards a Global Ethic—An Initial Declaration* that was signed by more than 200 leaders, scholars, and theologians from dozens of the world's communities of faith.

The preamble begins as a confessional exhortation about a world broken and full of pain. The world is in agony. The agony is so pervasive and urgent that we are compelled to name its manifestations so that the depth of this pain may be made clear.

Peace eludes us... the planet is being destroyed... neighbours live in fear... women and men are estranged from each other... children die!

This is abhorrent!

We condemn the abuses of Earth's ecosystems.

We condemn the poverty that stifles life's potential; the hunger that weakens the human body; the economic disparities that threaten

so many families with ruin... Between the litany of failure and the affirmations that follow comes the notion of a global ethic bursting forth.

But this agony need not be.

It need not be because the basis for an ethic already exists. This ethic offers the possibility of a better individual and global order, and leads individuals away from despair and societies away from chaos.

We are women and men who have embraced the precepts and practices of the world's religions:

We affirm that a common set of core values is found in the teachings of the religions, and that these form the basis of a global ethic.

We affirm that this truth is already known, but yet to be lived in heart and action.

We affirm that there is an irrevocable, unconditional norm for all areas of life, for families and communities, for races, nations, and religions. There already exist ancient guidelines for human behaviour which are found in the teachings of the religions of the world and which are the condition for a sustainable world order.

The idea of a Global Ethic remains controversial and has spawned dozens of conferences, classes, and books. Agree or disagree, though, the morning news each day suggests that it may be the soundest, safest idea still available to us, locally as well as globally. The second half of the preamble offers a series of powerful affirmations.

We declare: We are interdependent. Each of us depends on the well-being of the whole, and so we have respect for the community of living beings, for people, animals, and plants, and for the preservation of Earth, the air, water and soil.

We take individual responsibility for all we do. All our decisions, actions, and failures to act have consequences.

We must treat others as we wish others to treat us. We make a commitment to respect life and dignity, individuality and diversity, so that every person is treated humanely, without exception.

We must have patience and acceptance. We must be able to forgive, learning from the past but never allowing ourselves to be enslaved by memories of hate. Opening our hearts to one another, we must sink our narrow differences for the cause of the world community, practicing a culture of solidarity and relatedness.

We consider humankind our family. We must strive to be kind and generous. We must not live for ourselves alone, but should also serve others, never forgetting the children, the aged, the poor, the suffering, the disabled, the refugees, and the lonely. No person should ever be considered or treated as a second-class citizen, or be exploited in any way whatsoever. There should be equal partnership between men and women. We must not commit any kind of sexual immorality. We must put behind us all forms of domination or abuse.

We commit ourselves to a culture of non-violence, respect, justice, and peace. We shall not oppress, injure, torture, or kill other human beings, forsaking violence as a means of settling differences.

We must strive for a just social and economic order, in which everyone has an equal chance to reach full potential as a human being. We must speak and act truthfully and with compassion, dealing fairly with all, and avoiding prejudice and hatred. We must not steal. We must move beyond the dominance of greed for power, prestige, money, and consumption to make a just and peaceful world.

Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of individuals is changed first. We pledge to increase our awareness by disciplining our minds, by meditation, by prayer, or by positive thinking. Without risk and a readiness to sacrifice there can be no fundamental change in our situation. Therefore, we commit ourselves to this global ethic, to understanding one another, and to socially beneficial, peace-fostering, and nature-friendly ways of life. We invite all people, whether religious or not, to do the same. The Declaration continues for another half a dozen pages, focusing on commitments to a culture of…

- *non-violence and respect for life,*
- *solidarity and a just economic order,*
- *tolerance and a life of truthfulness, and*
- *equal rights and partnership between men and women.*

The document is short and was purposely endorsed with a sense of tentativity and newness by including "towards" and "initial." It is full of interesting notions and suggestions, a curriculum by itself about religious values, their effectiveness, and the future of the human race.

The Charter of the United Religions Initiative (2000)

In 2000, the United Religions Initiative (URI) was signed and a network of interfaith groups around the world joined in a shared commitment. As the Charter says,

The purpose of the United Religions Initiative is to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.

Any group of interfaith people with at least seven members representing at least three religious, spiritual, or indigenous traditions is welcome to apply for membership in URI if they are committed to URI's purpose as unfolded in the Charter. At this writing there are over 250 "Cooperation Circles" in 50 countries participating.

The preamble of the Charter covers much of the same territory as the affirmations found in *Towards a Global Ethic*. But a new series of principles were also enunciated, built on shared values, that provide diverse groups of people a way to safely, fruitfully interact with each other.

Here are the principles:

1. The URI is a bridge-building organisation, not a religion.

2. We respect the sacred wisdom of each religion, spiritual expression and indigenous tradition.

3. We respect the differences among religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions.

4. We encourage our members to deepen their roots in their own tradition.

5. We listen and speak with respect to deepen mutual understanding and trust.

6. We give and receive hospitality.

7. We seek and welcome the gift of diversity and model practices that do not discriminate.

8. We practice equitable participation of women and men in all aspects of the URI.

9. We practice healing and reconciliation to resolve conflict without resorting to violence.

10. We act from sound ecological practices to protect and preserve the Earth for both present and future generations.

11. We seek and offer cooperation with other interfaith efforts.

12. We welcome as members all individuals, organisations and associations who subscribe to the Preamble, Purpose and Principles.

13. We have the authority to make decisions at the most local level that includes all the relevant and affected parties.

14. We have the right to organise in any manner, at any scale, in any area, and around any issue or activity which is relevant to and consistent with the Preamble, Purpose and Principles.

15. Our deliberations and decisions shall be made at every level by bodies and methods that fairly represent the diversity of affected interests and are not dominated by any.

16. We (each part of the URI) shall relinquish only such autonomy and resources as are essential to the pursuit of the Preamble, Purpose and Principles.

17. We have the responsibility to develop financial and other resources to meet the needs of our part, and to share financial and other resources to help meet the needs of other parts.

18. We maintain the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct, prudent use of resources, and fair and accurate disclosure of information.

19. We are committed to organisational learning and adaptation.

20. We honour the richness and diversity of all languages and the right and responsibility of participants to translate and interpret the Charter, Articles, Bylaws and related documents in accordance with the Preamble, Purpose and Principles, and the spirit of the United Religions Initiative.

21. Members of the URI shall not be coerced to participate in any ritual or be proselytized.

Decalogue of Assisi for Peace (2002)

In January 2002, Pope John Paul II called together 200 religious leaders from the world religions to pray and craft a new ten commandments, one which provides the groundwork for peace and dialogue among religions.

1. We commit ourselves to proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic spirit of religion, and, as we condemn every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or of religion, we commit ourselves to doing everything possible to eliminate the root causes of terrorism.

2. We commit ourselves to educating people to mutual respect and esteem, in order to help bring about a peaceful and fraternal coexistence between people of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions.

3. We commit ourselves to fostering the culture of dialogue, so that there will be an increase of understanding and mutual trust between

individuals and among peoples, for these are the premise of authentic peace.

4. We commit ourselves to defending the right of everyone to live a decent life in accordance with their own cultural identity, and to form freely a family of their own.

5. We commit ourselves to frank and patient dialogue, refusing to consider our differences as an insurmountable barrier, but recognising instead that to encounter the diversity of others can become an opportunity for greater reciprocal understanding.

6. We commit ourselves to forgiving one another for past and present errors and prejudices, and to supporting one another in a common effort both to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence, and to learn from the past that peace without justice is no true peace.

7. We commit ourselves to taking the side of the poor and the helpless, to speaking out for those who have no voice and to working effectively to change these situations, out of the conviction that no one can be happy alone.

8. We commit ourselves to taking up the cry of those who refuse to be resigned to violence and evil, and we desire to make every effort possible to offer the men and women of our time real hope for justice and peace.

9. We commit ourselves to encouraging all efforts to promote friendship between peoples, for we are convinced that, in the absence of solidarity and understanding between peoples, technological progress exposes the world to a growing risk of destruction and death.

10. We commit ourselves to urging leaders of nations to make every effort to create and consolidate, on the national and international levels, a world of solidarity and peace based on justice.

Taken together, these pioneering documents and others coming in their wake give the human family essential tools for creating a peaceful future. Here at last, in spiritually inclusive language, is the groundwork for including and honouring each one of us, wherever we come from and whatever our race and religion.

Rights, Responsibilities and Skills of Dialogue

For true dialogue to occur it needs to take place within a protective environment of mutually accepted rights and responsibilities, rooted

in two fundamental values: respect for the human person and trust in the process of dialogue. Dialogue works best when the participants are willing to develop certain skills that facilitate the process.

Rights Responsibilities Skills

1. Each person has the right to define him/herself without being labeled by others.

2. Each person must be willing to seriously question his/her assumptions about 'the other'.

3. Each person should be able to evaluate and articulate his/her own attitudes, values and positions on issues within the context of his/her tradition.

4. Each person has the right to express his or her beliefs, ideas and feelings.

5. Each person must allow the same right of self-expression that s/he expects for him/herself.

6. Each person should learn how to be more sensitive to what the other is saying.

7. Each person has the right to ask questions that help him/her understand what someone else has said.

8. Each person should ask questions that respect the other's right of self-definition, even in times of conflict or disagreement.

9. Each person should learn how to respond to questions in ways that help others understand.

10. Each person has the right not to change or be forced to change.

11. Each person must accept the others as equal partners in the dialogue, and acknowledge the dignity of the traditions represented.

12. Each person should learn to deal with different points of view while maintaining his/her own integrity.

13. Each person has the right to expect that what is said will be held in confidence.

14. Each person must agree to hold what others say in confidence.

15. Each person should learn to deal with others from a position of mutual trust, based on an expectation that others come to the dialogue in a spirit of honesty and sincerity.

Learning and Doing

The new inter-religious neighborhood we've been exploring offers an unprecedented set of learning opportunities. On your own, in a classroom, a congregation, the new demographics mean most of us have resources nearby to study inter-religious dialogue and relationships and start to take our learning seriously. Teachers abound, starting in your congregation and your neighbor's. They know how to lead a class through the remarkable documents we've described, and compare them perhaps, with passages in their own traditions and literature.

Until you are able to include the 'stranger' in your classroom, of course, studying interfaith relations stays two-dimensional. One of the best first steps is to invite members of other faiths to visit and perhaps speak to your community. A panel allows several religions to be represented. Taking an interfaith group to a series of sanctuaries or communities, each representing a different tradition, is another popular way to get acquainted.

Making the stranger-to-friend transition gracious and relaxed is the prelude to good interfaith relationships. Whatever the programme, whoever is invited, following a few guidelines can help this highly sensitive beginning, when people meet each other:

Offer Hospitality: Most racial, ethnic, and religious traditions have elaborate hospitality rituals and conventions, though they tend to get lost in today's bustling world. The stories and lore of hospitality are well worth rediscovering whenever strangers are meeting for the first time. Food is important. Music is usually a winner. Graciousness is the key. Mutual respect, as we noticed several times already, offers the ground we walk on.

Deep Listening: The art of listening turns out to be a crucial factor in building healthy communities. Strong personal relationships among people from different traditions depends on listening carefully. Careful listening deepens into a discernment that goes beyond words. Faith and practice regularly take us to regions beyond words, so this is no surprise; yet, when you share sacred time with people from different forms of faith and practice than your own, its startling to feel the whole universe gets a little bigger, along with your appreciation.

The Power of Dialogue: In the past decade, the nascent interfaith community locally and globally has learned to depend on engaged dialogue – one-on-one conversation about issues that matter and small group work, punctuated by plenary sessions where learnings are shared.

Keynote speakers and panels are important, clerics and lay leaders are often wonderful contributors, and every tradition has wisdom to share. But conversation among members of different traditions – where *everyone* in the circle is heard, is the force growing the interfaith movement. When people are offered a friendly place to talk about what is most important to them, vitality and trust start to seep into the community.

How do you deal with red-hot issues that are too sensitive to talk about, particularly with strangers? The key is to initiate your conversations (and relationships) around issues of value focussed on what people find most important, not the issues which come with complex disagreements and conflicted emotions. The questions focus our attention on what we most value from our respective backgrounds and help us frame a vision of a religiously peaceful world we can start to create.

One of the most involved interfaith dialogue networks in the world, the Interfaith Encounter Association, with offices in Jerusalem, organises ongoing dialogue programmes in Jerusalem, between Palestinian and Jewish communities, and throughout the Middle East. They include youth meetings, meetings for women, and those for the whole community. Rather than talking about their disagreements, Christians, Jews, and Muslims, by the hundreds, even thousands, listen to each other with respect as they talk about scripture, theology, holy days, fasting, religious education, life-style, and dozens of other issues. They do the work to keep from demonizing the enemy and to enrich themselves, and they are providing a ray of hope in the Middle East.

From Learning to Doing: Learning about faith and practice usually includes moving from the idea to the act, challenging us to walk the talk. The emerging interfaith community is finding its significance and vitality in networking, developing connections with similarly minded people near and far. Without any traveling, you can become both locally and globally connected by starting a United Religions Initiative circle in your own community, perhaps with a circle of friends or a group of congregations. Those who have attended the twice-a-decade Parliament of the Worlds Religions typically come home with new local friends they met thousands of miles from home.

These associations, formal and informal, strengthen your own interfaith work. The *mantra* among activists is collaborate and build capacity. The internet in particular has given collaboration all sorts of new meanings.

Parallel networks outside of the religious community exist, full of secular people with deeply spiritual lives who probably share many of your values and dreams for the future, and it is worth connecting with them. A number of interfaith groups are focussed on the environment, for instance. They will find valuable colleagues who share many of their values at the Earth Charter Initiative, a global network of people whose Charter echoes and resonates with the themes we've explored in *Towards a Global Ethic* and elsewhere.

The International Bill of Rights project (IBOR) is a nonprofit group started in the late nineties supporting "a process for individuals, organisations and governments to draft – in a single document – an International Bill of Rights enforceable in the local courts of all countries."

IBOR represents a strong potential partner for the aggregate faith community, a place where secular and religious folk can work on common cause and learn to enjoy their differences. Interfaith dialogue can be introduced into all sorts of community activities, enriching the local community while making it safer. The local Rotary Club, for instance, is an interfaith organisation these days, and the local library serves an interfaith constituency. Paying attention paves the way to action.

How should we study interfaith dialogue and relationship? Finally it is a personal question and a congregational question. Answering it for yourself and in your community is a tangible step towards healing a wounded world.

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOURS

INTERFAITH FACTS

A comparison of the beliefs, practices and vitality across Jewish, Christian and Muslim congregations in America, developed cooperatively through Faith Communities.

INTERFAITH FACTS

A comparison of how your neighbours worship and practice their faith. The values of the Hartford Seminary community include respect for the other, interest in the beliefs and worldview of the other, and openness to the possibility that encounter and relationship with the other may in surprising ways change the self. We do not expect or even seek to always agree with the other; our purpose is, rather, academic inquiry and dialogue.

This new report reflects the importance of this interfaith dialogue, both to understand the other and to understand ourselves better. We are confident that the information presented here will encourage dialogue that will lead to new and unexpected relationships among the various faith communities represented in the *Faith Communities Today* study. By definition a dialogue is somewhat open ended. It is a journey that has not been precisely mapped.

It is a process of mutual discovery which promises the possibility of something new emerging, perhaps something no one has dreamed of or expected, a realigning of the self perhaps, a reshaping of one's own hopes and dreams. We encourage you to read and reflect on this report in this spirit of discovery.

It is a part of our mission as Hartford Seminary as well as a great privilege to be able to play this important public role. Today, after the tragic events of September 11, the participation and leadership of Hartford Seminary in these now widening and increasingly urgent conversations feels more like an institutional responsibility or, speaking like my Calvinist ancestors, even a call from God to serve the wider public even more than before.

This report is an example of what Hartford Seminary does so well, linking scholarship with faith in practice and a commitment to interfaith dialogue. The first *Faith Communities Today* report, "A Report on Religion in America Today," was an important first step to increased sensitivity to the United States' pluralistic religious landscape. This second report, "Meet Your Neighbours: Interfaith Facts," asks you to take the next step, to open yourself to learning about, talking with and relating to people whose faith traditions differ from yours.

WITH OUR APOLOGIES

The map showing the distribution of Muslim Mosques on page 5 inadvertently repeated regional percentages from the preceding map. The correct figures are:

Northeastern States…..	27%
Southern States…….	30%
North Central States…..	8%
Western States……	15%

The following percentages can be added to the pie charts showing the periods of founding for the various faith families:

Faith Family Before 1945- 1966- 1990—

	1945	*1965*	*1989*	*2000*
Oldline Protestant Churches	76%	14%	8%	2%
Roman Catholic Parishes	69%	21%	8%	2%
African American Churches	51%	23%	21%	5%
Reform and Conservative Temples	47%	32%	16%	5%
Orthodox Christian Churches	52%	15%	24%	9%
Evangelical Protestant Groups	38%	25%	26%	11%
Muslim Mosques	5%	7%	58%	30%

America's New Interest in Interfaith Issues

by Carl S. Dudley and David A. Roozen

The minor conflicts and raging wars at the beginning of our 21st century make us even more aware that religious intolerance feeds on ignorance and misinformation and that this intolerance is perpetuated by the absence of contact among peoples.

The consequences, often tragic, are readily apparent every day. Even within the remarkable pluralism of the United States – and even with our remarkable, 24/7 access to more information than anyone can consume – the majority of us lack appreciative understanding and contact with persons of other faiths.

Especially after 9-11, the information reported on the following pages is uniquely significant. It represents the views and practices of faith groups that feel and often express tensions that originated in other parts of the world.

In these pages, we discover that each faith community offers nurture and affirmation of members, and that each proclaims its commitment to peace in the human community.

At the same time each group has its own boundaries and truth claims that make dialogue difficult. Every faith community has a hard side that makes judgments, seeks justice, and is prepared to struggle (in various ways) against the intervention by others upon areas it considers sacred.

Any group that measures itself by its best and others by their worst destroys dialogue. By contrast, the *Faith Communities Today* study compares the responses of 14,301 Pastors, Rabbis, Imams and other key informants, who reported on their congregations. The differing profiles that result suggest neither positive nor negative evaluations. Rather they define the unique character of each community.

In the brief comparisons among these profiles Muslims and Jews in the United States can discover how much they have in common, as well as points at which they may be significantly different. Orthodox and Catholic Christians can find similarity in faith practices even if doctrines take distinct forms and emphases.

Protestant groups that often define themselves by their differences can explore the strengths of common beliefs even as they anchor faith in their uniqueness. All will see themselves and the other more clearly.

In a medieval story, a scholar from Paris studied for two years in London. On his return he was asked what he learned about London. He replied that during his travels he learned much about the British town but even more about his home city. Many who engage in dialogue across religious differences have similar experiences. Faith communities, also, learn a great deal about themselves as they compare themselves with other groups.

FACT is a cooperative effort of the 41 denominations and faith groups in America represented on the following pages, reflecting the practices and convictions of more than 90% of those who worship regularly. It is funded jointly by the Lilly Endowment and by the cooperating religious bodies.

The results of the full study can be accessed through the web site at www.fact.hartsem.edu. Based on that study, this publication will help you look at your own faith community alongside congregations other faith groups.

After observing the broad strokes that map the size and distribution of America's faith communities, you can explore the emphasis congregations give to different personal practices and social views within seven religious bodies. We invite you to sense the dynamics of growth, vitality and community outreach among the groups and consider similarities and differences among the professional leaders.

In each of these areas you have access to basic information as you seek to build on the positive elements in your tradition as a church, parish, assembly, temple or mosque. We believe you will learn more about yourself"even as you more clearly discover your religious neighbour.

Getting These Interfaith FACTs

The data presented was gathered in late 1999 and early 2000 by the faith groups themselves working collaboratively as part of Faith Communities Today. In each case, professional researchers used

representative samples of their faith group's congregations. They asked key informants to answer carefully constructed questions about their congregations.

Researchers from 41 denominations identified several dozen common questions. Because the meanings of words or phrases may differ in the various faith groups, researchers sometimes changed the phrasing of specific questions. A few topics important to some groups were regarded as less interesting by others, and were omitted by the latter groups. As a consequence, the FACT survey does not provide comparable data on all topics. The maps show the regional distribution of congregations in each of the faith families; the first pie chart indicates the proportion of congregations located in rural, urban or suburban settings.

The second pie chart reveals how recently the faith group's congregations were founded. (Many congregations, it should be noted, were established significantly earlier than 1945; that year was selected by researchers because it marked the beginning of the post World War II building boom.) As you look at these pie charts, what do the location of congregations and the periods when they were founded suggest about your faith group?

Religious Practices Encouraged by Congregations

Personal religious practices often are central to strategies for preserving and transmitting faith traditions. Practices – including Sabbath observance, dietary requirements, and the display of religious symbols in the home—become distinguishing characteristics of individuals, congregations and faith groups.

That is why the researchers who planned the FACT study were so interested in the ways temples, churches and mosques encourage personal religious practices. In wording their questions, researchers used terms their constituents would recognize. The Jewish questionnaire, for example, changed "holy day observance" to "keeping Sabbath," and "dietary restrictions" became "observing kashrut".

Because they were studying the life and practices of congregations, researchers asked about the degree of emphasis placed on such practices during worship and in educational programmes. For example, in their worship and education Evangelical Protestant congregations may place greater emphasis on abstinence from premarital sex than the emphasis given to the display of religious objects in the home. Orthodox Christian and Roman Catholic parishes may emphasise fasting more than Oldline Protestant churches. On the other hand, the Muslim tradition of

abstinence from alcohol may be so strong that greater emphasis in worship and education may be less necessary. The figures presented indicate the percentage of congregations which place "high emphasis" on the practices noted in worship and education, and reflect the importance congregations attach to reinforcing these elements of their traditions.

African American researchers omitted all of these questions, both because they wanted to look at several unique topics and because it was necessary for them to limit the number of questions. Roman Catholic researchers omitted questions on dietary restrictions and abstinence because those are considered well-known teachings of that church.

Several religious groups in one small American city used the FACT survey at the same time. One Disciples of Christ congregation spent considerable time discussing their lack of emphasis on fasting as compared with data from a neighboring mosque and Orthodox Christian parish. They decided that fasting could be a very important spiritual discipline – and that the members might be healthier as well!

As you and your neighbours discuss the emphasis your congregations place on personal religious practices, you might consider how your faith traditions are being demonstrated and passed on to the next generation through particular practices.

Social Views and Community Outreach in Temples, Churches and Mosques

It is helpful to compare how temples, churches and mosques understand themselves and also to consider how the content of the sermons may reflect differences in needs or emphasis among faith groups. FACT researchers asked about both topics. The key informants were asked, "How well do the statements 'our congregation is working for social justice' and 'our congregation is a moral beacon in the community' describe your congregation?" Respondents were given five choices, from "hardly at all" to "very well" show the percentages of respondents who felt that the statements reflect the identity of their congregations "quite well" or "very well." (Catholics responded to the statement "Our parish makes a difference through moral and ethical teachings.")

Respondents also were asked about the frequency of sermons on "social justice or social action" and on "personal spiritual growth" show the percentages of respondents who reported that these topics were the focus of preaching "always" or "often." For all traditions, sermons on spiritual growth are much more frequent than messages

on social justice. Although most congregations do not see themselves as highly engaged in social justice, many groups in every tradition understand their role as promoting spiritual growth.

In addition to the community involvement reported on pages 4 and 5, the vast majority of congregations are involved in some form of community service either directly or in cooperation with another organisation. As you and your neighbours discuss these issues, you might look at how your traditions are reflected in sermons and in community projects.

Interfaith and Ecumenical Activities

The interaction of temples, churches and mosques is of increasing significance. Shared worship services, joint service projects, and participation in interchurch or interfaith councils of congregations are examples of the variety of ways in which faith experiences among different groups may be linked. The FACT survey, designed even before 9/11, sought to document the evidence of such relationships.

While the nationwide results displayed in Figures 19 to 22 are interesting in their own right, they invite comparison with your own community's experience. How frequently is your church, temple or mosque involved in joint worship, in celebrations or programmes other than worship, in joint social outreach or service projects? Does it participate in an ecumenical or inter-religious council? Do the clergy of your community enjoy a ministerial or other professional association? Why or why not? Do you and your neighbours know and appreciate your similarities and your differences, and do you build on these?

Many Christian congregations are located outside urban areas where there is less religious diversity, reducing the opportunities for inter-religious events. Opportunities for common activities among Christian bodies are generally available, but events that involve temples and/or mosques are more likely to happen in major population centers. As the pie charts on pages 4 and 5 indicate, Jews and Muslims are more likely to live in cities and suburbs. That fact, in itself, may account for some of the disparities shown in the figures in this booklet.

It should be noted that the African-American researchers focussed on a different question, concerning inter-racial rather than interfaith events; those responses are not included.

Sense of Purpose and Growth of Temples, Churches and Mosques

The researchers who developed the FACT surveys were eager to discover any possible relationship between a congregation's sense of

purpose and the level of participation. They asked key informants several questions about congregational identity, including one seeking to measure whether the temple, church or mosque had a clear sense of purpose.

Respondents were asked to indicate, on a scale of one to five, how accurately the statement, "Our congregation has a clear sense of mission and purpose" represented them indicates the percentage of those who said the statement described their congregation "very well" or "quite well." The same congregations were asked to report whether, since 1995, there had been an increase or decrease of at least five percent in participation, or whether participation stayed about the same. The responses displayed in seem to indicate a correlation between the two topics. You and your neighbours may wish to discuss whether this applies in your temples, churches or mosques. If you would like to compare your own evaluation with those of other congregations in your particular denomination. Additional information is available in the "Report on Religion in the United States Today".

How Jews, Christians and Muslims Feel about Their Congregations

Serious efforts in getting to know our neighbours will take us beyond the formality of meetings and activities and even beyond agreed upon common projects. We understand our neighbours best – and they understand us best – when together we learn and talk about the life of the communities of faith to which we belong. This may be especially true when we share our feelings about our congregations.

The researchers who worked together in FACT sought to get beneath the surface with several questions about congregational identity. Respondents were invited to indicate the extent to which their temples, churches or mosques "feel like a large, close-knit family" and are "spiritually vital and alive."display the percentages of the respondents who said that the characterizations fit their congregations "very well" or "quite well."

How well do these statements describe your situation? As you compare your community of faith to the nationwide percentages, you can not only share how you feel about your own congregation, but you can describe specific ways that the human and spiritual needs of members are met both within and across religious traditions. What can you learn from the experiences of others to strengthen the ways in which the needs of your members are met?

Another important measure of a congregation's approach to its community is the extent to which newcomers are easily assimilated.

The six groups who asked that question seem very much alike. Is that also true of your congregations? What are some of the different ways new members are welcomed and integrated in your congregations? How do you welcome persons of other faith traditions?

How Churches, Temples and Mosques Reach Out to Newcomers

The public face that faith groups present to the community in which they are located is also very significant. It is one very important way in which those who attend temples, churches and mosques get to know or to be known by their neighbours.

The FACT researchers were interested in how the use of media – specifically newspapers, radio or television, and direct mail – correlated with the growth of congregations, and with the sense of well being or community identity of the temples, churches and mosques. Local newspapers are the most public ways in which all groups present themselves in their communities. The responses were actually quite similar from one group to another within all the media (see Figures 28, 29 and 30). Roman Catholic researchers included announcements to their parishioners in the direct mail category; this might have influenced the higher percentage reported. Researchers also asked whether congregations used worship services or special programmes to reach newcomers. It seems likely that liturgical churches, like Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians, find it more difficult to design special services intended to attract non-members. As you seek to know your neighbours better, you will be more conscious of the ways different groups use the media and reach out to newcomers.

Professional Leadership: A Look at Rabbis, Ministers, Priests and Imams

Leadership in the various faith groups differs significantly. As we seek to understand the ways in which our neighbours worship and work, it is useful to know as much as possible about the religious leaders in the community: who they are, their backgrounds, and what is expected of them in their congregations.

Displays a great deal of information about senior professional leaders of the faith groups. The percentage of these persons who serve full and part time is shown, along with the percentage of those who are "tent makers", i.e. also have some form of outside employment. (Roman Catholics did not include this question in their surveys because priests in most parishes are provided by the diocese or religious order. Catholic researchers had other sources of information and did not need this data.)

The three Protestant Christian communities provide an interesting contrast. For example, although the percentage of full time ministers or pastors is quite similar for Oldline, African American and Evangelical Protestants, the percentage that have outside jobs differs significantly. The percentage of part time clergy among Oldline Protestants perhaps reflects the large numbers of small congregations in rural or town and country settings.

As demonstrated by Reform and Conservative Jewish temples have both the highest percentage of full time clergy and professional leaders with the highest educational levels. These groups are, of course, smaller in total numbers but the percentages are significant. Evangelical and African American Protestants historically have looked for different experiences and preaching patterns when seeking clergy, although increasingly seminary education is regarded as important.

Roman Catholic researchers did not ask the question about education because required seminary training is provided by the church; Catholic scholars indicate that the typical parish priest has the equivalent of the master of divinity degree that was the basis for comparative data.

Although Muslim researchers did not ask this question, the majority of mosques are known to rely on part time professional leadership. For historic and cultural reasons, the training of Imams is very different from that of Christian and Jewish clergy.

The differences evident and the historic patterns described above will stimulate good discussion as both lay and clergy members of the various faith groups seek to learn more and understand their neighbours better.

Volunteer Leadership in Temples, Churches and Mosques

The roles that lay persons (i.e. non-professional leaders) play within congregations is another interesting subject shows the percentage of regularly participating adults who currently hold volunteer leadership roles in congregations – tasks like serving on administrative committees, teaching children, youth or adults in educational programmes, or leading outreach programmes, etc.

The dramatic differences among the various faith groups are based largely on organisational patterns among the religious groups. Protestant churches, with numerous educational and other programmes, have historically relied heavily on lay leadership. Catholic, Orthodox Christian and Muslim groups have traditionally had relatively fewer activities other than worship. Those patterns appear to be changing as educational

programmes are increasingly in the hands of trained lay leaders and as parishes, temples and mosques engage in social service efforts.

Researchers also were interested in the ease or difficulty of recruiting volunteers. The six groups that asked the question received strikingly similar results:

"It's tough work, but we did it!"

As in the other sections of this report, the differences and similarities reflected among faith groups provide stimulating subjects for dialogue and conversation. Getting to know each other includes an understanding of the organisational patterns and the theological bases for the roles traditionally assigned to religious leaders and to the laity.

The information in this booklet can answer your questions and stimulate conversations between you and your neighbours.

This resource has been prepared to:

- Help participants in interfaith and inter-religious conversations discuss your own and your neighbours' religious convictions and practices.
- Help local Pastors, Rabbis, Imams, and others look at your own communities, review opportunities for collaborative efforts, and seek better inter-group relations.
- Assist leaders of religious organisations evaluate and plan programmes including "living room dialogues."
- Help community leaders, including secular groups understand the faith-based organisations with whom you collaborate.
- Help college and seminar students, professors and other researchers learn more about the varied landscape of America's faith communities.
- Aid journalists and other writers obtain data for interpretive articles.
- Help government officials at all levels understand and serve their constituents better.

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CASE STUDY: FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION AND OTHER NOTABLES INSTITUTIONS

THE CENTER FOR FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

OTHER GOVERNMENT FUNDING RESOURCES

U.S. Nonprofit Gateway—official U.S. gateway to all government information

Corporation for National and Community Service—members and volunteers serve with national and community nonprofit organisations, faith-based groups, schools, and local agencies to help meet community needs in critical areas.

Department of Housing and Urban Development
Department of Education
Department of Labour
Grant and Funding Opportunities

Touching Lives and Communities Workshop Series—Designed to help organisations in strengthening their efforts to improve social services in their communities, the series addresses capacity building and strategic planning, corporation and foundation giving, board development and individual giving, government grant applications and grant management, and programme evaluation.

NORTH AMERICAN INTERFAITH NETWORK

The North American Interfaith Network is a non-profit association of interfaith organisations and agencies in Canada, Mexico and the United States.

MISSION

NAIN's programmes seek to build communication and mutual understanding among diverse religious groups throughout North America. Through its annual conference, newsletter, website, member organisations, Board and supportive participants, NAIN offers networking opportunities to numerous interfaith organisations. NAIN affirms humanity's diverse and historic spiritual resources, bringing these to bear on contemporary global, national, regional and local issues.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN ACTION

I am grateful to all the members of the North American Interfaith Network who were able to join us in Richmond, Virginia July 12-16 for NAINConnect 2007: Embracing Religious Freedom – Past, Present and Future. I am also grateful to the leadership of the Interfaith Council of Greater Richmond for putting together a phenomenal conference and for being outstanding hosts. Sharon Clayton, Midge Falconer, Lynn Johnston and Annette Khan deserve special thanks for taking on the responsibility of hosting this conference on behalf of their all-volunteer organisation.

Little did we realise that the need to embrace religious freedom in the present would become front-page news throughout the United States on the day that our conference opened. On that Thursday morning, Rajan Zed became the first Hindu to offer a prayer to open a session of the United States Senate. At the same time, three Christian protestors stood in the balcony of the Senate and reminded us all of just how much work we still need to do to insure religious liberty for all by denouncing Zed's prayer directed to the "false gods of Hinduism."

In Richmond, we were too engrossed in the daily grind of coordinating the conference to spend much time rehashing the events of that day. In the weeks that followed NAINConnect 2007, the NAIN Board of Directors engaged in frequent e-mail exchanges on the topic. A young adult who attended the conference on scholarship first posted the issue on the NAINOnline Open Forum, wondering if the NAIN Board might direct a letter to U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Senate Chaplain Barry Black thanking them for their courage in inviting a Hindu chaplain to offer the opening prayer and encouraging them to extend the same privilege to members of other minority faith traditions. Reid, a Mormon, and Black, a Seventh-Day Adventist, are themselves members of minority Christian traditions in the United States.

The initial sentiments of the Board seemed to be in favour of sending such a letter, which I drafted. Further discussion led us to discern that this step was not in keeping with the identity of the North American Interfaith Network. As a network of interfaith organisations, NAIN should encourage its member organisations to speak out on issues of religious freedom without becoming the mouthpiece for such advocacy. NAIN also realises that it cannot presume to speak for each of the more than 60 member organisations that make up our network. We are simply too diverse to hope to adequately represent the opinions of each of our members on any issue.

At the same time, NAIN hopes to be a resource for member organisations that are trying to voice their opinions on the interfaith issues of our times. I would be happy to share the letter that I drafted to Sen. Reid and Chaplain Black with any organisation or individual who might want to use that letter as the starting point for their own correspondence with these national leaders. Please write to me at mikeg@ifcmw.org if you are interested in seeing this letter.

In the meantime, let me encourage each of us to meditate upon the words that Rajan Zed shared with the United States Senate on the morning of July 12. His words are quite powerful and relative to our shared work, lest they be too soon forgotten in the wake of this controversy.

"Let us pray. We meditate on the transcendental glory of the deity supreme, who is inside the heart of the earth, inside the life of the sky and inside the soul of heaven. May he stimulate and illuminate our minds. Lead us from the unreal to real, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality. May we be protected together, may we be nourished together. May we work together with great vigor. May our study be enlightening. Peace, peace, peace be unto all."

Follow-up Story:

The Interfaith Community of Northern Nevada, the Nevada Clergy Association, and various civic leaders honoured Nevadan chaplain Rajan Zed at a reception on August 2, attended by Catholic, Protestant, Latter Day Saints, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Bahá'í clergy and various political, government, community, and student leaders.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: THE FOCUS AT INTERNATIONAL, INTERFAITH GATHERING

NAIN's 2007 Connect was nestled into Virginia's rolling hills at a magnificent Episcopal retreat center outside of Richmond. The beautiful

setting was punctuated by historical markers dotting Virginia highways and country lanes, reminders that the freedoms we discussed as interfaith brothers and sisters were paid for in blood shed in these same hills.

The theme for the July 12-16 Connect was Religious Freedom, About 90 participated. A direct descendent of Thomas Jefferson showed up at the opening banquet in 18th century dress, and we heard Tom's words, his story, with an emphasis on the idea of 'religious freedom' in the United States and the struggle to establish it.

Highlights this year included the langar, a blessed lunch that the greater Richmond Sikh community prepared and gave everyone – an interfaith concert at a beautiful Baptist church (including a welcome and blessing from its pastor) – and Charles Haynes' superb keynote about teaching religious freedom in public schools.

A strong opening panel addressed "Current State of Religious Freedom, Nationally and Internationally." Through the next several days more than two dozen workshops unpacked religious freedom from all sorts of angles. A number of distinguished presenters were well-received, including a young adult panel reflecting on Virginia Tech's recent mass murder by asking "Where Was God in Times of Tragedy?"

A group of four Muslims from different backgrounds and a Christian moderator offered a well-received panel on "Islam and Democracy," the final plenary session.

Sharon Clayton, Midge Falconer, Lynn Johnston, and their team from the InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington and Interfaith Council of Greater Richmond did a wonderful job, leaving those who attended informed, refreshed, and happy to have been with old friends and new.

Podcast: Bettina Gray Interview with Charles Haynes

- To listen to the podcast after clicking on the above link, you may simply double click on the Haynes07.mp3 file.
- You can subscribe to this podcast to automatically receive updates as we add them. Click on the above link.
- On a Mac, click Subscribe to this feed and choose iTunes as your feed from the drop-down menu.
- On a PC, when you click Subscribe to this feed, it will be saved to a folder in your Favourites in Internet Explore 7. If you have downloaded iTunes (free download) you can also subscribe to

it in iTunes. Copy the URL above. Open iTunes, click the Advanced Menu/Subscribe to Podcast. Paste the URL.

- Listen on your computer or on your mp3 player.

*Langar**Teja Singh, NAIN Board, Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action*** NAINConnect 2007 was unique in offering the Sikh *langar* meal as our lunch on Saturday. As it was the first for some, this brief note is an attempt to explain its availability and protocol. *Langar* is the free kitchen instituted by Guru Nanak (1469—1539), the founding guru of the Sikh faith. It signified a practical step to assert social equality, where all break bread together as members of a family. Historically, there is the famous incident of Emperor Akbar of India, who was requested to eat in the *langar* before having an audience with Guru Amar Das (1479 -1574), who had made it an integral institution of the Sikh church.*Langar* is served to one and all, without any consideration of creed, caste or social status. Meat is never served in Sikh langar, and nobody is ever asked to pay for the meal partaken.Our thanks to the Sikh community of Richmond, as they came with their members of all ages to greet us and serve the free *langar* meal to all.

10TH ANNUAL INTERFAITH AWARENESS WEEK

Young Adult Scholarship

Don Mayne, Honorary NAIN Board member, Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action

For more than ten years NAIN has offered scholarships to young adults, 18 to 35, to assist them to attend NAINConnects. The number has ranged from three to a dozen, and a special new scholarship was added this year by Dr. Teja Singh of Edmonton in memory of his parents. The recipient is to be a young adult of the Sikh faith, and the new scholarship will be similar to others offered by NAIN.

Dr. Singh has been concerned that the Sikh faith be included in all the relationships and experiences of the NAIN fellowship. While individuals who are not members of NAIN's local organisations are eligible, he would like to see member organisations seek out young adults from the Sikh communities in their areas and encourage them to participate in the local group and apply to attend the NAINConnect in San Francisco next July. Local organisations would benefit if they provided the balance of the cost of attendance to supplement the scholarship available. This, of course, applies to nominees for all the young adult scholarships which NAIN offers each year.

Scholarship winners will be full members of the NAINConnect and it is significant that much of the leadership for recent NAINConnects has come from young adults.

INTERFAITH AND THE ENVIRONMENT: ANOTHER EARTH KEEPERS SUCCESS STORY

(Marquette, Michigan)—It was standing room only for the debut of the Boreal Chamber Symphony in Marquette, Michigan in a faith-based benefit concert to protect Lake Superior.

Nearly 400 people attended the free three-hour concert Sunday night (July 15, 2007) that raised thousands of dollars for the Lake Superior Defense Fund.

The Lake Superior Day concert was sponsored by the Superior Watershed Partnership and the Cedar Tree Institute, northern Michigan non-profits who organise numerous faith-based environment projects.

The concert honoured the Earth Keeper Initiative that the two Marquette-based non-profit organisations founded in 2004.

The Earth Keepers have numerous ongoing faith-based environment projects to protect the immense Lake Superior watershed including wild rice restoration and Earth Day household hazardous waste collections across northern Michigan.

The Earth Keepers work with 140 northern Michigan churches/temples from 9 faith traditions (Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, United Methodist Church, Unitarian Universalist, Baha'i, Jewish, and Zen Buddhist).

Meet your NAIN Board of Directors

Michael J. Goggin, M.A. – Chair

Mike represents the InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington. A young adult scholarship recipient 6 years ago, Mike remains involved with the young adults as Interim Young Adult Co-Chair. He also chairs the Nominations Board.

Dr. Tarunjit Singh Butalia—Vice-Chair

Tarunjit chairs the Interfaith Committee, World Sikh Council – America Region, is Vice-President of Interfaith Central Ohio, and Treasurer of Religions for Peace. He serves on the Nominations Board, runs the polls for the Membership Committee, and contributes regularly to NAINews.

Jan Saeed—Secretary

Jan represents the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States. She has volunteered to serve as Interim Young Adult Co-Chair, along with Mike.

Kay Lindahl – Treasurer

Kay has a long history with interfaith work in southern California. She is a recent past chair of NAIN and is currently a Friend of NAIN. She is in charge of NAIN memberships for the United States and serves on the Nominations Board. She has authored several books.

Committee Chairs

Bettina Gray – Communications

Bettina is one of the founding members of NAIN and is an independent video producer, interview host and author. She is known for A Parliament of Souls. She represents Creativefilms.

Rev. Sam Muyskens – Administration and Finance

Sam is a founding member of NAIN and represents Interfaith Ministries of Wichita, Kansas, where the first NAINConnect was held.

Rev. Paul Chaffee—Programme

Paul represents the Interfaith Center at the Presidio in San Francisco, site of the 2008 NAINConnect.

Paul McKenna – Membership Canada

Paul represents the Scarboro Missions Interfaith Committee, in Toronto,Canada.

Jonathan Rose—Membership Mexico

Jonathon represents the Consejo Interreligioso de Méjico.

Members

Dr. Gail Allen

Gail represents the United Church of Canada and resides in Toronto.

Susan Cook

Susan is a new Board member and represents the Interfaith Council of Greater Kansas City.

Rev. Barry Cooke

Barry represents the Multifaith Action Society of British Columbia, which jpsted the NAINConnect 2006 in Vancouver, Canada.

Midge Falconer

Midge represents the Interfaith Council of Greater Richmond, host of the NAINConnect 2007.

Kinza Ghaznavi

Kinza represents Religions for Peace – USA. She is doing graduate studies at George Washington University.

Rev. Rob Hankinson

Rob is with the Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action. He has agreed to contribute to NAINews book reviews.

Dr. F. Gard Jameson

Gard represents the Interfaith Council of Southern Nevada, host of the NAINConnect 2005.

Steve Naylor

Is with the Interfaith Center at the Presidio.

Dr. Teja Singh

Teja is with the Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action. He founded a Young Adult Sikh Scholarship in honour of his parents.

Judy Trautman – Editor, NAINews

Judy is Co-Chair of the MultiFaith Council of Northwest Ohio.

Dr. Woody Trautman

Woody represents the MultiFaith Council of Northwest Ohio, which he co-chairs with his wife Judy. He serves on the NAIN Programme Committee.

Barbara Trites—Membership

Barbara represents Interfaith Marketplace.

Dr. Jim Wiggins

Jim represents the Inter-religious Council of Central New York in Syracuse. He contributes to the NAINews book reviews and chairs the By-Laws Review Committee.

Honorary Members

Elizabeth Espersen

Elizabeth is a former NAIN president and retired executive director of Thanks-Giving Square in Dallas, Texas. She now resides in Syracuse and does interfaith consulting through “Meetings in Faith”.

Dr. Peter Laurence

Peter is a former NAIN Board chair and Executive Director of Education as Transformation, Inc., Wellesley College. He resides in Putnam Valley, NY.

Rev. Dr. Don Mayne

Don is with the Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action. He is a past NAIN Board chair.

Ralph Singh

Ralph represents Gobind Sadan, USA. A former NAIN Board secretary, he has devoted over 35 years to education, spirituality and social justice.

Rev. Dr. Charles R. White

Chuck is one of the founding members of NAIN and was NAINews editor for a long time. He now resides in Wofford Heights, CA.

Book Review

The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of CivilizationsBy Rabbi Jonathan Sacks(Continuum: London and New York, 2002; Paperback Edition 2003)Perhaps many readers will already be familiar with this book, but it is so insightful, provocative and inspiring that I lift it up for attention by readers of NAIN's e-letter in case you do not yet know the book. Jonathan Sacks is the chief rabbi of the United Kingdom and declares himself to be an Orthodox Jew in terms of his personal faith commitment. Should anyone imagine from that information, however, that she can predict the argument of the book, a great surprise likely awaits in reading of this book.

The issue is the impact of globalization in the form of global capitalism on the cultures and religions of the world. This is but the most recent of six major "universalisms" that have been promulgated by their successive champions that have been proposed as the way for all humanity. The challenge Rabbi Sacks presents is whether religious leaders will exert their influence in a way that will assure that there are alternative ways of assessing the contemporary world scent that benefit humanity, rather than passively accepting a top-down imposition of it that is devastatingly harmful to all of us.

If the former role is to be played out effectively Sacks argues that a number of recognitions will be required. For example:

…unity creates diversity. The glory of the created world is its astonishing multiplicity. (p. 21)

We need not only a theology of commonality…but also a theology of difference: why it exists, why it matters, why it is constitutive of our humanity, why it represents the will of God. (21)

The world is not a single machine. It is a complex ecology in which diversity—biological, personal, cultural and religious—is of the essence. Any proposed reduction of that diversity through many forms of fundamentalism that exist today…would result in a diminution of the texture of our shared life, a potentially disastrous narrowing of the horizons of possibility. (22)

The "dignity of difference" is an inspired concept, in my view, because its challenges the hegemony of all the forms of universalism that have historically and contemporaneously been promoted to eliminate the singular and the different. Respecting difference and learning from those different from us is a way out of the long-standing propensity that has made humans see difference as a threat. Rabbi Sacks rightly observes that when difference leads to war, both sides lose. But there is an alternative: When difference leads to mutual enrichment, both sides gain!

He charts a course for this paradigm shift that is demanded of everyone who seeks peace rather than war.

We must learn to listen and be surprised by others.

We must make ourselves open to the stories of others, which may profoundly be at odds with and conflict with our stories. In doing this we may be forced to learn that their image of us is radically different from our image of ourselves.

We must learn the art of conversation (not dialogue) from which truth emerges from the process of letting our worlds be enlarged by the presence of others who think, act and interpret reality in ways radically different from our own.

He concludes this mapping with a challenge: "We will make peace only when we learn that God loves difference and so, at last, must we."

This is a challenging, provocative and rich book that warrants careful reading and pondering. I have lifted out only a sampling of Rabbi Sacks' thinking. Read, mark and inwardly digest this finely wrought work.

Media Briefs

A full-length independent documentary feature film from New Moon Productions, LLC, the film follows the journey of Valarie Kaur

as she drove across the country in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, to document stories of hate violence and discrimination. The young Sikh college student seeks to discover who counts as "one of us" in a world divided into "us" and "them." A second phase in 2005 in which Director and Co-Producer Sharat Raju and a film crew joins Valarie, revisits her original interviewees, as well as experts on the issues examined in the final film. The film premiered September 14, 2006 in Phoenix, Arizona.Audience responses have been overwhelmingly positive. The film was represented at the NAINConnect 2007.

Three Faiths, One God: Judaism, Christianity, Islam: The Auteur Productions Ltd. documentary was produced and directed by Gerald Krell with associate producer Adam Krell and photographer / editor Meyer Odze. The film compares similarities and differences in religious beliefs and practices of the three faiths Christianity Islam, and Judaism. It also explores how people of goodwill in these faith communities are coming to terms with historical conflicts that impact their lives today, the crisis of the fundamentalist approach to religious pluralism and tearing down barriers to understanding.Aired by numerous PBS affiliates, the documentary is available on DVD or VHS for home use or institutional screenings with study guide. http://www.3faiths1god.com/index.htm The filmmaker introduced the NAINConnect 2007 screening and copies were available at the book stall. The film is very well presented. The study guide suggests ways to use the film in segments or as a full screening.

Prayer in America: The two-part documentary (airing November 2007 on public television stations) asks the question, *What role has prayer played in shaping the development and history of America?* The film is inspired by and is the companion to *Prayer in America* (by James P. Moore, Jr., originally published by Doubleday as *One Nation Under God: The History of Prayer in America*)PRAYER IN AMERICA producers Alison Rostankowski and Chip Duncan interview a wide-ranging group of scholars, writers, and experts on the history of religion and prayer in America. The documentary reflects diverse, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives.The first segment topics include American Prayer, Immigrant Experience and Prayer, Slavery and Prayer, The Social Gospel and The Prosperity Gospel and Prayer, and School Prayer. The second segment explores Forgiveness and Prayer, Science and Prayer, War and Peace, Healing and Prayer, and Civil Religion and Prayer.The documentary website http://www.prayerinamerica.org/ has many details and two complete sections inviting Interfaith interaction—Interfaith

Resources and Interfaith Dialogue (an invitation to respond to prayer issues from one's own perspective.

What's Up? A Call for Articles on Local Interfaith Work

One of the most interesting parts of a NAINConnect for this editor is to hear the many interesting stories of local, regional and national interfaith work in North America. As we all know, this is difficult and sometimes lonely work. But NAIN was never intended to serve only as a producer of yearly conventions. The NAIN mission is to serve as a network among member interfaith organisations, to support and enhance their individual missions.

It was suggested by Tarunjit Butalia at the NAINConnect 2007 in Richmond that NAINews solicit articles from local interfaith groups on specific topics. Therefore, the purpose of this section will be to share some of the work that is going on in our member organisations. Each quarter, the editor will suggest a topic related to interfaith work. All of you are invited to submit articles of how your organisation addresses that topic/issue. A selection of articles will be published in the subsequent NAINews. Hopefully, this will publicize some of the good work that is being done in our member organisations, while it inspires the rest of us in our own programming.

The topic selected for the Winter 2007 issue of NAINews is How does your interfaith organisation address the issue of hunger? Please submit your articles of 300 words or less to 'news_editorATnain.org'. [The email address substitutes AT for the usual @ sign, in order to avoid spam. Please compose the email address in the usual way.] You may include up to two small jpegs related to the article. The editor reserves the right to shorten the article for publication, but will make every effort to communicate with you regarding any content edits.

Interfaith Briefs

Dr. Tarunjit Singh Butalia, NAIN Board of Directors Vice-Chair, World Sikh Council–America Region

Dallas, Texas, US: An Interfaith Peace Chapel is being built by The Cathedral of Hope, a United Church of Christ mega church near Dallas Love Field. The $3.7 million chapel was designed by late architect Philip Johnson. Contributions came from three countries, 32 states, and 98 Texas cities. (Dallas Morning News, 8/13/07)

Boston, Massachusetts, US: A new report, "World Religions in Boston: A Guide to Communities and Resources" prepared by the

Pluralism Project at Harvard University has been released. The report was first published in 1994 and updated in Summer of 2007 using student interns. The work was done under the supervision of Professor Diana Eck. (Boston Globe, 8/11/07)

Spokane, Washington, US: Plans are underway to develop a Garden of Unity to replace an urban run down West Central neighborhood. The local Interfaith Council's Faith and Environment Network has been working for several years in cleaning up vacant lots. The community gardens are intended to provide vegetables, fruits and flowers that will nourish the poor who go to local food banks, and also create unity among local residents while providing work for at-risk youth. (Spokesman Review, 8/11/07)

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, US: The 12th annual Interfaith Peace Camp, for kindergarten to sixth graders, was organised by the Peace and Justice Center in the second week of August. The Director of the Center remarked, "We try to center it as an outlet for creativity and diversity, and do a lot of cooperative things, with anything that promotes peacefulness and a respect for differences." (The Times Leader, 8/9/07)

Minneapolis, Minnesota, US: Mourners of many faiths joined together on August 5 evening to pay tribute to the victims of the bridge that collapsed into the river. Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus and adherents of many other faiths came together and prayed. The Executive Director of Minnesota Council of Churches, Rev. Peg Chemberlin said, "It's important that we stand together and say, 'Minnesota, your heart is full of courage and compassion,'" (Los Angeles Times, 8/6/07)

St. Louis, Missouri, US: The Interfaith Partnership of Metropolitan St. Louis organised an interfaith trip to Jerusalem starting July 22. 28 Christians, Jews, and Muslims spent 10 days visiting Israel and Palestine. During the trip they visited the sacred places of worship of Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Bahai's. They also met with local religious and community leaders. The hope is that the visit will help build interfaith understanding in the St. Louis area. (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 8/4/07)

Baltimore, Maryland, US: Local Christians, Muslims, and Jews have come together to renovate a Habitat for Humanity home 'peace by piece'. The effort was undertaken by Chesapeake Habitat for Humanity to bring together Muslims, Christians, and Jews from local congregations to sponsor and build two houses in the hope of fostering greater unity among the three religions. (Baltimore Sun, 7/29/07)

Fresno, California, US: The Interfaith Alliance of Central California celebrated its 10th anniversary with a Fourth of July brunch with the title 'Celebration of Our Diversity." The group is committed to affirming religious pluralism, celebrating differences, and protecting minority rights, separation of church and state, and civility in political debate. (Fresno Bee, 7/30/07)

Edmonton, Canada: The first chair of Islamic Studies at University of Alberta hopes to promote interfaith dialogue in the local community so that there is a greater understanding of Islam and Muslims. Professor Ibrahim Abu-Rabi said, "It's very clear that the majority of Christians and Muslims are open to dialogue with each other… It doesn't mean that they are in dialogue but they like the idea." (Edmonton Journal, 7/4/07)

Montreal, Canada: A survey of intercultural and interfaith relations by the Association of Canadian Studies suggests that many Canadians fear that language friction over French-English may be overshadowed by friction between Christians and Muslims when Canada celebrates its 150th anniversary a decade from now. Some scholars are skeptical about the results of the poll which was carried out early June 2007. (Edmonton Journal, 7/4/07)

Toronto, Canada: The Peace Garden in Toronto will be moved in the renovations of the Nathan Philip Square but its main elements will be retained. The compromise came as a relief to peace and interfaith activists who feared that key elements such as the eternal flame would be absent in the new Peace Garden. The garden was opened by the then Canadian Prime Minister in 1984, the flame was lit by Pope John Paul II, and the site was dedicated by the Queen of England. Setsuko Thurlow, a Toronto resident who survived the 1945 US atomic bombing of Hiroshima helped plan the peace garden in 1984. Interfaith community and peace advocates will be consulted in the relocation plans.

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GLOSSARY

Abdu'l Baha (ab DUL BAAHA): Eldest son of Baha'u'llah. After his father's death, he continued spreading the Baha'i Faith in Europe and North America.

Advent (Christian): Liturgical New Year Day begins a period of preparation for celebration of birth of Jesus; Observed with advent calendars, wreaths and ceremonies.

Advent Fast (Orthodox Christianity): Marks the beginning of the forty-day vegetarian fast in preparation for Christmas day.

Advent: Christian time of preparation for observing the birth of Jesus Christ. Advent begins on the Sunday nearest November 30 and is the beginning of the Christian worship year. Advent is observed with the lighting of advent candles, display of wreaths, and special ceremonies. Advent also anticipates the coming again to earth of Jesus Christ. The season continues through December 24.

Al-Hijra/New Year (Muslim): Muslimic cycle of months begins; Formulas determine holy days based on lunar events. Islamic remembrance of the migration of Muhammad and followers to Medina in 622 C.E. and establishment of first Islamic state. No specific religious rituals are observed. Beginning of Islamic calendar year.

All Hallow's Eve: Christian celebration of mystery combining prayers and merriment involving children and families. It is a prelude to All Saint's Day.

All Saints Day (Christian—Roman Catholic): Day for honouring saints; Holy Day of Obligation in the Roman Catholic Church where saints have special formal status.

All Saints Day: Christian day for honouring saints, known and unknown. In general, saints are persons with reputation for unusual lives of holiness and devotion to God or who were martyred for their faith. A Holy Day of Obligation in the Roman Catholic Church where saints have special formal status.

All Souls Day (Christian): Prayers of intercession offered for the dead.

All Souls Day: Christian day of prayers of remembrance and intercession for the dead. Prayers of the faithful are seen as helping to cleanse the souls for the vision of God in heaven.

Allah (AH lah): The Muslim name for God. "The term 'Allah' in Arabic simply means the One and Only True, Universal God of all. To think that Allah is different from God, with a capital 'G' is no more valid than saying the French Christians worship a different god because they call him 'Dieu'" (from Bridge Building Between Christians and Muslims by Dr. Jamal Badawi.)

Amrita (om REET a): A special sweetened water used in the initiation process into the Sikh order of the Khalsa.

Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Christian): Celebration of Gabriel announcing to the Virgin Mary the coming birth of Jesus.

Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Christian celebration of Gabriel announcing to the Virgin Mary the coming birth of Jesus as the Incarnation of Creator God.

Asala (Turning of the Wheel of Teaching): Buddhist observance of the day when Gautam Buddha made his first public proclamation to five ascetics. He taught the middle way, the noble eight-fold path and the four noble truths.

Asalha Puja Day (Buddhist): One of the sacred days in Buddhism; It marks the coming into existence of the Triple Gems, namely the Lord Buddha, His Teaching, and His Disciples.

Ascension of Abd al-Baha (Baha'i): Celebration of the this leader's spirit rising to its heavenly dwelling.

Ascension of Abdu'l-Baha: Baha'i celebration of the rising of the spirit of Abdu'l-Baha to the heavenly dwelling.

Ascension of Baha'u'llah (Baha'i): Recollection of the death of Mirza Husayn Ali; Observed by prayers and readings and suspension of work.

Ascension of Baha'u'llah: Baha'i recollection of the death of Baha'u'llah, the founder. Observed by prayers and readings. Work is suspended.

Ascension of Jesus (Christian): Recognition of the return of Jesus to heaven after the resurrection; Perhaps the earliest observed celebration in Christianity, it is observed through prayers and music.

Ascension of Jesus: Christian recognition of the departure of Jesus from earth after the resurrection. It is perhaps the earliest observed

celebration in Christianity. It is observed with worship including prayers and music.

Ash Wednesday (Christian): Use of ashes to signify penitence; first day of Lent.

Ash Wednesday: Christian observance to begin the 40-day season of Lent. Ashes are marked on worshippers as a sign of penitence.

Ashura (Muslim): Optional single day fast recognising the Creation, Noah's departure from the ark, and the saving of Moses from Pharaoh.

Ashura: An Islamic optional one day fast recognising the Creation, Noah's departure from the ark, and the saving of Moses from Pharaoh. Prophet Muhammad's Grandson, Hussain, was martyred on this date in 683/684 AD.

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Christian — Roman Catholic): Observation honouring the belief that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was translated to heaven at her death.

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Roman Catholic Christian observance commemorating the belief that the Blessed Virgin Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven at the end of her earthly life.

Autumn Feast (American Indian): An occasion to share food with the Spirits of Autumn.

Ayathrem Gahambar (Zoroastrianism): Celebrates prosperity.

Ayyam-I-Ha (Baha'i): Beginning of a series of special days (Intercalary Days) that balance out the calendar; Observed by hospitality and acts of charity.

Ayyam-I-Ha: Baha'i beginning of a series of special days (Intercalary Days) that balance out the calendar. It is observed by hospitality and acts of charity.

Bab(bab): A prophet in the Baha'i faith who proclaimed he had a mission from God.

Baha'i (ba HI): A worldwide faith. Baha'is believe that humankind is one family created by God. They believe in the: Oneness of God Oneness of religion Oneness of humankind Baha'is believe that the purpose of life is to know and worship God and to work for the good of humankind.

Baha'u'llah(ba ha UL ah): The founder of the Baha'i Faith. Mirza Husayn Ali Nuri, a Muslim and one of the Bab's followers, became

known as Baha'u'llah (The Glory of God). He is revered by Baha'is as the Promised One of whom the Bab had spoken.

Baisakhi (Vaisakhi): Hindu start of the New Years. Greetings that wish good life in coming days are exchanged. In Sikh the day commemorates the founding of the Khalsa, a distinctive Sikh brotherhood.

Baptism of Jesus (Christian): Commemorates the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus.

Beginning of the Ecclesial Year (Orthodox Christianity): Marks the Orthodox Christian New Year.

Beheading of John the Baptist: Christian remembrance of the death of John who is known for preparing the people so they would recognise Jesus as the Messiah.

Beltane (Wiccan): Celebration of the conjoining of the goddess with the energy of the god in the sacred marriage which is the basis of all creation.

Bhati (BAH tee): Hindu word for "devotion," expressed during worship at the temple.

Birth of Baha'u'llah (Baha'i): Celebration of the birth of their teacher and Messiah; Observed by refrain from work.

Birth of Baha'u'llah: Baha'i celebration of the birth of their founder and teacher. Refrain from work.

Birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji (Sikh): Beginning in 1999 C.E., this birthday is taken as the beginning of their calendar year.

Birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji: Sikh honouring of the birthday of their founder.

Birth of the B'ab (Baha'i): Honouring of the birth of the founder, Mirza 'Ali-Muhammed, in 1819 C.E.

Birth of the Bab: Baha'i honouring of the founder of the Babi religion, forerunner to Baha'u'llah and the Baha'i faith.

Blessing of the Animals: Christian observance of showing respect for the domestic animals that mean much to people. Observed on various dates—especially related to St. Francis.

Bodhi Day / Rohatsu (Buddhist): Celebration of the time when Prince Gautama took his place under the Bodhi tree vowing to remain until he attained supreme enlightenment.

Bodhi Day: Buddhist celebration of the time when Prince Gautama took his place under the Bodhi tree, vowing to remain there until he attained supreme enlightenment.

Bodhisattva (bod his SAT va): A spiritual guide in Buddhism. The bodhisattva is one who has reached enlightened understanding, and delays final enlightenment to help others along the spiritual path.

Bon Festival (Shinto): Ancestral soul's day; Observed by enjoying special meals and visiting graveyards to recall the souls of ancestors.

Bon Festival: Shinto ancestral soul's day. People visit graveyards to recall the souls of ancestors. Families enjoy special meals.

Buddha (BOO dah): "Buddha" is a title of honour, meaning "Enlightened One." The historical Buddha, Prince Siddhartha Gautama, is said to have been born in India in 635 BCE (before the common era).

Buddha Day (Buddhist): Celebration of the birth of Buddha.

Buddhist (BOO dist): A person who follows or adheres to the teachings of the Buddha.

Candlemas: Christian celebration of the presentation of young Jesus in the temple to the aged Simeon. New beginnings are recognised. Candles are lighted. Wicca (pagan) celebration of the return of the sun and lengthening of days.

Challah(HAH lah): A sweet braided bread served during a Jewish Shabbat dinner.

Chinese New Year: Begins a fifteen Day Festival for Chinese people of all religions. Family reunions with thanksgiving and remembrance of departed relatives take place. Traditionally a religious ceremony honours Heaven and Earth.

Christ the King (Christian): Celebration of the pre-eminence of Jesus over all earthly authorities.

Christmas Day (Christian): Celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Christmas Day: Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Observed by prayers, exchanging of gifts, and family parties.

Christmas Eve (Christian): Celebration of the arrival of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem the birth of Jesus; Observed with worship, festive meals, manger scenes.

Christmas Eve: Christian celebration of the arrival of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem for for the birth of Jesus. It is observed with worship, candle lighting, manger scenes and festive meals.

Christmas Fast: Orthodox Christian fasting period in preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus Christ.

Christmas: A season of the Christian year following Advent and preceding Epiphany.

Circumcision of Jesus (Christian): Recognition of Jewish foundations, commemorating the day the infant Jesus was brought to the Temple for the ritual act of circumcision.

Circumcision of Jesus: Christian recognition of its Jewish foundations. The infant Jesus was brought to the Temple for the ritual act of circumcision.

Confucius' birthday: Chinese moral philosopher, K'ung Fo-tzu, born in 551 B.C.E.

Conversion of St Paul: Christian observance of the experience of the Paul when he was confronted by a vision of Jesus while on his way to persecute Christians and became a leading presenter of Jesus. Observed at worship services.

Conversion/Confession of St Peter: Christian recognition of the classic words of St Peter who responded to a question by Jesus and described him as the long awaited messiah.

Corpus Christi (Christian — Roman Catholic): Celebration in honour of the Eucharist, the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Corpus Christi: Christian (Roman Catholic) celebration in recognition of the Eucharist—the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. The real presence of the body and blood of Jesus is honoured.

Dalai Lama birthday (Buddhist): Observation with traditional dances, picnics and singing; Each Dalai Lama is seen as a reincarnation of predecessor.

Dasa Laxana (Jain): Observance with focus on the holy texts describing the ten characteristics to which Jains aspire.

Dasa Laxana: Jain observance with focus on the holy texts describing the ten characteristics to which devotees aspire.

Dassera: Hindu celebration of victory and valor. Lord Rama is remembered as winning a victory over evil.

Day of Hajj (Muslim): Observance of revelation at Mt. Ararat to Mohammed.

Day of Hajj: Islamic observance of the revelation to Mohammed on Mt Arafat.

Day of the Covenant (Baha'i): Celebration of the covenant given in the last will and testament of Baha'ullah.

Day of the Covenant: Baha'i celebration of the covenant given in the last will and testament of Baha'u'llah.

Death of Guru Nanak Dev: Sikh observance of the passing of the first great Guru.

Declaration of the Bab (Baha'i): Recognition of the declaration in 1844 C.E. by Ali Muhammed that he is the anticipated "Coming One" of all religions; Observed by suspension of work.

Declaration of the Bab: Baha'i recognition of the declaration in 1844 by Ali Muhammed that he is the anticipated "Coming One" of all religions. Work is suspended.

Deep Diwali: Jain commemoration of the liberation of Mahavira from the endless cycle of birth and rebirth.

Deepavali: Hindu celebration—a five-day festival of lights marking the end of the Hindu year. First day is observed as a holiday by many Hindu people.

Dehwa Hanina: Mandean "Little Feast" observance.

Dewali (Hindu): Festival of Lights symbolising the human urge to move toward the light; Observed with gift exchanges, fireworks and festive meals.

Dharma (DAR ma): The sermons and teachings of the Buddha.

Dharma Day (Buddhist): Buddha's first discourse following his enlightenment.

Diwali: Hindu Festival of Lights symbolising the human urge to move toward the light. Gift exchanges, fireworks and festive meals. Jain celebration of Lord Mahavira's day of final liberation.

Dormition (falling asleep) of the Theotokos: Orthodox Christian commemoration of the death and burial of the Virgin Mary.

Dussehra (Hindu): Festival celebrating the victory of Lord Rama over the demons; Observed by worship of, prayers to and meditation upon Lord Rama.

Dussehra: Hindu festival celebrating the victory of good over evil. Goddess Durga and Lord Rama prevail over the demons. Prayers for blessings and favour are offered.

Easter (Christian): Commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from his death by crucifixion; Observances include worship services beginning at sunrise, music, feasting, and parades.

Easter: The most holy of Christian sacred days. The day commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from his death by crucifixion.

Observances include worship services beginning at sunrise, special music, feasting, and parades.

Eid (EED): Eid means "a recurring happiness or festivity" and Muslims celebrate two Eids: Eid-ul-Fitr, or the Festival of Fast-breaking and Eid-al-Adha, the Feast of the Sacrifice.

Eid al-Adha (Muslim): Feast of Sacrifice, the most important feast of Muslim; Concludes the Hajj and is a three-day festival recalling Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to Allah; Observed by giving meat to the poor.

Eid-ul-Fitr ('Id-al-Fitr): Islamic event marking the close of Ramadan. It is a festival of thanksgiving to Allah for enjoying the month of Ramadan. It involves wearing finest clothing, saying prayers, and fostering understanding with other religions.

Eid-ul-Adha: Islamic Feast of Sacrifice. The most important feast of Islam. It concludes the Hajj and is a three-day festival recalling Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to Allah.

Elevation of the Holy Cross (Christian): Celebrates when Saint Helen found the Holy Cross, which was stolen in the 7th Century C.E.

Entry of Mother of God (Orthodox Christianity): Commemorates the entrance of Mary into the Holy of Holies in the Hebrew temple, marking the beginning of her life of absolute dedication to God.

Epiphany (Christian): Commemoration of the manifestations of the divinity of Jesus Christ; The homage of the magi is honoured.

Epiphany: Christian commemoration of the manifestations of the divine nature of Jesus Christ. The homage of the magi to the infant Jesus is honoured by some. For others the Baptism of Jesus is the remembered event. A season of the Christian year from the close of Christmas to the beginning of Lent.

Exaltation of the Life-giving Cross: Orthodox Christian celebration of the finding by St Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine, of the Cross upon which Christ was crucified.

Fall Equinox: Wicca observance of the change of seasons.

Falling Asleep (Dormition) of the Theotokos: Orthodox Christian observance of the death, burial, resurrection and transfer to heaven of the Virgin Mary.

Fasali: The Zoroastrian seasonal calendar—"fasal" means "season". These dates remain unchanged from year to year.

Fast in honour of the Holy Mother of Lord Jesus: Orthodox Christian 14 day fasting period in preparation for the celebration of the Great Feast of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary.

Feast Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe (Christian — Catholic): Honouring of a legendary appearance of the Virgin Mary near Mexico City in 1531 C.E.

Feast of Archangels Michael and Gabriel (Orthodox Christianity): Celebrates the Archangels Michael and Gabriel and all the other angels mentioned in the Bible.

Feast of Mithra: Zoroastrian festival with focus on Mithra as the angel of light. From ancient times in Iran it has been a time of gratitude for life and light.

Feast of our Lady of Guadalupe: Catholic Christian honouring of a legendary appearance of the Virgin Mary near Mexico City in 1531 C.E.

Feast of St Basil: Orthodox Christian commemoration of St Basil the Great, who wrote a Eucharist Liturgy which bears his name.

Feast of the Holy Apostles: Christian—The martyrdom of Saint Peter and Saint Paul recognised.

Feast of the Theophany: Orthodox Christian Feast to recall the revelation of the Holy Trinity in the baptism of the Lord.

Feast of the Visitation: Christian remembrance of Mary and cousin Elizabeth to whom the news of Jesus' coming was given.

First Nations Day: Canadian First Nations (Indian, Metis and Inuit) most sacred day on the summer solstice. Communities hold feasts and invite guests.

First Parkash (Sikh): Scripture, Adi Granth, installed in Golden Temple.

Founding of the Church: Mormon Christian commemoration of the appearance of the angel Moroni in 1830 to Joseph Smith. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day saints began at this time.

Four Chaplains Day (Christian): Commemoration of the event in World War II when four Chaplains of Jewish and Christian traditions gave their life jackets to others as a troop ship sank in the Atlantic Ocean.

Ganesa Chaturthi (Hindu): Lively festival honouring the god of prosperity, prudence and success; images of Ganesa are worshipped.

Ganesha: Hindu god of success.

Ganga Dussehra: Hindu honouring of the sacred river Ganga which flows from the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal.

Gantan-sai: Shinto New Year festival observed with prayers for inner renewal, prosperity and health.

Ghambar Maidyozarem (Zoroastrian): Celebration of the creation of the sky and the harvest of winter crops.

Gion Matsuri (Shinto): Honours sun god with parades, music and story telling.

Gita Jayanti: Hindu celebration of birthday of Srimad Bhagavad Gita and the revelation of the Gospel of Dharma to the world.

Good Friday (Christian): Remembrance of the crucifixion of Jesus and related events.

Granthi (GRAN tee): A designated reader, to read the Sikh scriptures during worship.

Guru Arjan Dev Martyrdom: Sikh time of remembering those who have suffered for the faith. Observed by reading the Guru Granth Sahib.

Guru Gobind Singh (goo roo go bind SING): The tenth and final guru, or teacher, in Sikhism. Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa, the Sikh brotherhood.

Guru Gobind Singh's Birthday (Sikh): Observation of the 1666 C.E. birthday of the last of the human gurus who installed Sikh scriptures.

Guru Gobind Singh's Birthday: Sikh honouring of the birth of the founder of the Khalsa who lived from 1469-1539 C.E.

Guru Granth Sahib Installation: Sikh remembrance of the eternal installation of the holy books, Granth Sahib.

Guru Nanak (goo roo na NAK): Founder of Sikhism; received a divine revelation from God in India in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries CE.

Guru Nanak's Birthday (Sikhism): Celebrates their founder, Guru's birthday; Even though his birthday is celebrated on October 31st, biographers record his birth on April 15th 1469.

Guru Nanak's Day: Sikh honouring of the birth of the first Sikh teacher who lived from 1469-1539 C.E. Sacred readings, prayers, hymns, meals together.

Guru Purnima: Hindu celebration of the ancient Gurus, in particular Sage Ved Vyas. A Guru is seen as a remover of darkness, a teacher. The date is the full moon of the month Asadha.

Guru Tegh Bahadur Martyrdom: Sikh time of remembering the execution of Teg Bahadur by the Moghul Emperor in India.

Gurudwara (GU RUD wa ra): A Sikh temple and community center.

Haile Selassi I birthday: Rastafari celebration honouring the founder.

Hajj: Islamic pilgrimage rites at Mecca on 7-12th days of month of Dhu al-Hajja. Concludes with Eid-ul-Adha when those not traveling to Mecca take part.

Hana Matsuri: Japanese Buddhist flower festival invoking a plentiful harvest.

Hanukkah (Jewish): Festival of Lights commemorating the Maacabean recapture and rededication of Jerusalem Temple in 165 B.C.E.; Observed with special readings and praise songs focusing on liberty and freedom and the lighting of the eight candle Menorah.

Hanukkah: Jewish Festival of Lights. It commemorates the Maccabean recapture and rededication of the Jerusalem Temple in 165-164 B.C.E. Special readings and praise songs focus on liberty and freedom. The eight candle Menorah is lighted.

Hanuman Jayanti: Hindu celebration of Hanuman who was an embodiment of Lord Rama. Devotion and selfless work are encouraged.

Hare Krishnas (hah ree KRISH NA): Native-born American Hindus who are members of the International society of Krishna Consciousness.

Hijra: The calendar system used in Islam.

Hindu (HIN doo): A philosophy or way of life with roots in India. Also a person who follows or adheres to the teachings of Hinduism.

Hola Mohalla (Sikh): Day when mock battles are fought and martial arts are displayed.

Holi (Hindu): Spring festival dedicated to the god of pleasure; Observed in a colourful and boisterous manner, with people showering each other with coloured water and smearing red and green powder on each other.

Holi: Hindu spring festival dedicated to the god of pleasure. It is observed in a colourful and boisterous manner. People shower each other with coloured water and smear red and green powder on each other.

Holy Cross Day: A Christian Day of recognition for the Cross on which Jesus was crucified as a central symbol of the Christian religion.

Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, Joseph: Catholic Christian celebration of the love between the family of Jesus.

Holy Family (Catholic Christian): Celebrates of the love between the family of Jesus.

Holy Innocents Day (Christian): Day of solemn memory of male children killed by King Herod in the attempt to destroy Jesus.

Holy Innocents Day: Christian day of solemn memory of male children killed by King Herod in the attempt to destroy Jesus.

Holy Pascha: Orthodox Christian feast day of the resurrection of Lord Jesus Christ.

Holy Saturday: Christian observance of the Saturday before Easter—a time meditation on the mystery of Jesus Christ.

Holy Thursday: Christian observance of the final meal that Jesus observed with his disciples. It is usually observed with the Sacrament of Holy Communion or a special Mass celebrating the institution of the Eucharist.

Holy Week (Christian): Observed the week before Easter with solemn ceremonies based on events in Jesus' life, especially on Holy Thursday and Good Friday.

Id-al-Adha (Eid-al-Adha): Islamic day to remember Abraham and the almost sacrifice of Isaac. Meat is given to the poor.

Id al-Fitr (Eid-al-Fitr): A 3 day Islamic fast marking the close of Ramadan. It is a festival of thanksgiving to Allah for enjoying the month of Ramadan. It involves wearing finest clothing, saying prayers, and fostering understanding with other religions.

Imbolc: Reflection on the power of the gods, from which physical and spiritual harvest will come.

Immaculate Conception (Roman Catholic): Day of celebrating the belief that Mary, mother of Jesus, was preserved from original sin all of her life; Observed as a day of obligation with required church attendance.

Immaculate Conception: Catholic Christian day of celebrating the belief that Mary, mother of Jesus, was preserved from original sin all of her life. A day of obligation and required church attendance.

Immaculate Heart of Mary: Catholic Christian honouring of Mary, mother of Jesus.

Installation of Scriptures as Guru Granth: Sikh scriptures are chosen as perpetual guru.

Intercalary Days: Baha'i insertion of days into the calendar in order to maintain their solar calendar.

Islam (IS lam): One of the three monotheistic, Abrahamic faith traditions. The Arabic word "Islam" means the submission or surrender of one's will to the one true God worthy of worship.

Janmashtami: Hindu celebration of the birthday of Krishna. Nightlong prayers are held in the Temples. A two-day observance.

Jashan Mehergan (Zoroastrianism): Celebrates the Festival of righteousness and justice.

Jashan Sadeh (Zoroastrian): Ritual time using symbolic elements and prayers commemorating the discovery of fire; Observed by the recital of sacred writings.

Jashan-e-Sadeh (Sadeh): Zoroastrian mid-winter celebration in which a bonfire is often used to express defiance of the cold of winter.

Jashne Tirgan (Zoroastrianism): The festival of water, one of the essential elements of the faith.

Jumah (JOO mah): Friday, the Muslim day of worship.

Jummatul Wida: Islamic last Friday of Ramadan observance.

Kathina (Buddhist): Monks are given new robes.

Kathina: Buddhist monks end a three-month rain retreat and are given new robes. Friends and family join to celebrate harmony.

Khalsa (KAL sa): The Sikh brotherhood.

Khordad Sal: Zoroastrian remembrance of the birth of Prophet Zarathushtra.

Kiddush (KID dush): A prayer in Judaism.

Kirtan (keer TON): Singing the praises of God, a central aspect of Sikh worship.

Kol Nidra (coal NID ra): In Judaism, a special evening service during Yom Kippur, where people pray and confess their sins.

Krishna (KRISH NA): A Hindu legend says that Lord Krishna loved Radha and liked to play practical jokes on her and her friends, like spraying them with coloured water.

Krishna Jayanti (Sri Krishna Janmashtami): Hindu commemoration of the birth of Krishna—the 8th incarnation of god Vishnu who took the form of Krishna to destroy the evil king Kansa.

Kwanzaa: An African American and Pan-African holiday celebrating family, community and culture, Kwanzaa is a secular observance

with some religious participation. Seven life virtues are presented. The dates are always December 26–January 1.

Lag B'Omer: Jewish observation of the counting of the day—the link—between Pesach and Shavout.

Lailat-al-Bara'ah (Shab-Barat): Islamic Night of Forgiveness. A night of prayer to Allah for forgiveness of the dead. Preparation for Ramadan through intense prayer.

Lailat-al-Miraj and Israa': Islamic observance of Mohammed's night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and his ascension to heaven.

Lailat-ul-Qadr: Islamic Night of Destiny. First revelation of Qur'an to Prophet Mohammed. Observed during the last ten days of Ramadan. Prayers to Allah for a good destiny.

Lakshmi (LOK shmee): A Hindu goddess, protector of business people.

Lammas (Wiccan): Festival of the first harvest.

Lammas: Christian first fruits celebration observed by placing bread baked from first harvest on the altar. From the Celtic Christian tradition. September 1 in northern hemisphere; February 1 in southern hemisphere.

Langar (LAN gar): A free kitchen which is always part of the Sikh gurudwara. Everyone is welcome at the meal.

Las Posadas: Mexican Christian festival re-enacting Joseph's search for room at the Inn for Mary and the birth of Jesus.

Laylat-al-Bara'ah or Shab-Barat (Muslim): Night of Forgiveness, this is a night of prayer to Allah for forgiveness of the dead; Preparation for Ramadan through intense prayer.

Laylat-al-Isr'wa al-Miraj (Islam): Commemorates Muhammad's night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and his assent to and return from heaven during the same night where he brought back God's commandment of the five daily compulsory prayers.

Laylat-al-Miraj or Nuzulul Qur'an (Muslim): Observance of Mohammed's night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and his ascension to heaven.

Laylat-al-Qadr (Muslim): Night of power, commemorating first revelation of Qur'an to Mohammed in 610 C.E.

Lazarus Saturday: Orthodox Christian celebration of the resurrection of Lazarus by Jesus, celebrated on the eve of Palm Sunday; revealing that Jesus in "the resurrection and life" of all mankind.

Lent (Christian): Forty-day period of preparation for Easter; A time of intense devotion, it is observed by fasting, frequent worship and acts of charity.

Lent: A Christian time of reflection and preparation for Holy Week and Easter. A forty-day time of intense devotion, it is observed by fasting, frequent worship and acts of charity. The season begins on Ash Wednesday.

Lilitu's Night: Pagan Temple Zagduku honouring of dark patron, Lilitu.

Litha (Wiccan): Celebration of sacred marriage in which God's energy is poured out in service of life.

Litha: Wicca celebration of the sacred marriage in which energy of the gods is poured into the service of life.

Los Posadas: Christian Traditional Latino celebration re-enacting the search by Joseph for a room at an inn for Mary to give birth to Jesus.

Lughnasadh: Wicca/neo pagan observance of first harvest of the year involving agricultural festivals and prosperity magic. The Christian name of Lammas is sometimes used.

Mabon: Wicca observance of the autumnal equniox when day and night are of equal length. A harvest festival time.

Magha Puja Day: Buddhist celebration of the presentation of teachings by Lord Buddha and assembly of holy men.

Maghi (Sikh): Commemoration of battle in which 40 Sikhs died for Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

Maghi: Sikh commemoration of a battle in which forty Sikhs died for Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

Maha Shivaratri: A Hindu festival in honour of Lord Shiva and his marriage to Goddess Parvati. Ceremonies involving prayers and hymns take place mostly at night. Special foods are not used.

Mahashivaratri (Hindu): Dedicated to Shiva, a deity whose cosmic dance creates the world.

Mahavir Nirvana (Jainism): The celebration of when their lord Mahavirs, reached Nirvana or Moksha; It is observed by lighting lamps.

Mahavir Jayanti (Janma Kalyänak): Jain festival honouring Lord Mahavira on the founder's birthday. Shrines are visited. Teachings are reviewed and reflected upon.

Mahavira Jayanti (Jain): Recognition of a great hero, Lord Mahavira.

Maidgoshahem (Zoroastrian): Joyous mid-summer feast relating to the creation of the waters; Observed with rituals, prayers, sharing food.

Maidgoshahem: Zoroastrian joyous mid-summer feast relating to the creation of the waters. Rituals, prayers and sharing food.

Maidyarem Gahambar: Zoroastrian winter feast involving rituals, prayers and sharing of food.

Makar Sakranti (Hindu): Celebration marking entry of the sun into Capricorn, observed by feeding the poor and offering libations to the dead.

Makar Sakranti: A Hindu celebration marking turning of the sun toward the north. Observed by flying kites, feeding the poor and offering libations to the dead.

Makkah [Mecca](MEK a): The place where the Prophet Muhammad was born, now in present day Saudi Arabia. Muslims who are physically and financially able to do so, are called on to make a pilgrimage to Makkah at least once in a lifetimes, during the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, is connected not only with the life of the Prophet Muhammad, but also, and even more importantly for the pilgrimage, with Abraham, the spiritual father of Muslims.

Martyrdom Day of Guru Tegh Bahaduri (Sikh): Observance of the anniversary of the martyrdom in 1675 C.E. of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth guru.

Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev (Sikh): Remembrance of those who have suffered for the faith; Observed by reading the Guru Granth Sahib.

Martyrdom of John the Baptist (Christian): Observance to remember the beheading of John, who challenged the moral life of King Herod.

Martyrdom of the Bab (Baha'i): Commemoration of Ali Mohammed's execution in 1850 C.E. by Persian political and religious powers; Observed by abstaining from commerce and work.

Martyrdom of the Bab: Baha'i—Ali Mohammed was executed in 1850 by Persian political and religious powers. Observed by abstaining from commerce and work.

Mary, Mother of God (Catholic): Celebration of the mother of Jesus.

Maulid-el-Nabi (Muslim): Commemoration of the birthday of Mohammed in 571 C.E.; Observed by reading of prophet's teachings and holding of religious meetings.

Maunajiyaras (Jain): Day of fasting, silence and meditation on the five holy teachers.

Maundy Thursday (Christian): Observance of the first Lord's Supper.

Maundy Thursday: Christian observance of the first Lord's Supper during Holy Week.

Mawlid-el-Nabi: Islamic commemoration of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad, founder of Islam, in about 570 C.E. Not universally observed. The prophet's teachings are read and religious meetings are held.

Meatfare (Judgement) Sunday: Orthodox Christian observance, two weeks before the start of the Great Lent, preparing the faithful for the celebration of the resurrection of Christ. This is the last day for eating of meat before the Great Lent.

Midsummer: Wicca/neo pagan observance of the bounty of nature. Fires are lit in honour of the Sun.

Milvian Bridge Day: Christian day of solemn reflection on the relationship of the spiritual community and the powers of civil government. On Oct 28, 312 C.E., Emperor Constantine prevailed in a battle and proceeded to make Christianity the legal religion of the Roman Empire. For further information go to Milvian Bridge event.

Mosque (MOSK): An Islamic place of worship.

Most Precious Blood of Jesus: Catholic Christian veneration of the Blood of Jesus and its life-giving power.

Muhammad (mu HAH mad): The Prophet Muhammad, born in Makkah [Mecca] in present day Saudi Arabia in 570 CE, is viewed by Muslims as the supreme model for humanity. An Arab and a descendant of Abraham, he received the divine revelations of Allah contained in the Muslim scriptures, the Holy Qu'ran [Koran], over a period of twenty-three years.

Muharram: The first day of the first month of the Muslim year.

Mulvian Bridge Day (Christian): Remembrance of October 28, 312 C.E., when Emperor Constantine prevailed in a battle and proceeded to make Christianity the legal religion of the Roman Empire;

Observed by reflection on religion and state relationships takes place.

Muslim (MUZ lum): A person who follows or adheres to the teachings of Islam.

Naming of Jesus Christ (Orthodox Christianity): Commemorates the circumcision and naming ceremony of Jesus.

Nativity of Mary, the Mother of God: Christian celebration of birth of the Virgin Mary.

Nativity of St. John the Baptist (Christian): Celebration of the role of John in baptizing Jesus; Special interest for Hispanic tradition

Nativity of the Mother of God (Orthodox Christian): Celebration of Mary the Mother of Jesus.

Nav Ruz: Zoroastrian New Years observance.

Navaratri Dusserha: Hindu Festival of the divine mother honouring Durga, wife of Shiva, and seeking her blessings. Also observed as a celebration recalling the days of Lord Krishna.

Navratra (Hindu): Festival of the divine mother honouring Durga, wife of Shiva, and seeking her blessings; Also observed as a celebration recalling the days of Lord Krishna.

Naw Ruz (Baha'i): Observance of the vernal equinox symbolising spiritual growth and renewal.

Naw Ruz: Baha'i observance of the vernal equinox symbolising spiritual growth and renewal.

New Church Day: Swedenborgian Christian (Church of the New Jerusalem) annual commemoration of the vision document, "The True Christian Religion", by Emanuel Swedenborg in 1770.

New Year (Islam): The Islamic cycle of months begins. Formulas determine holy days based on lunar events.

Nichiren Daishonin Memorial: Buddhist memory of Nichiren Daishonin and the Dai-Gohonzon, the true object of worship, for all humanity.

Nineteen Day Fast (Baha'i): Sunrise to sunset fast

Nineteen Day Fast: Baha'i Fast to be observed by adult Baha'is in good health—sunrise to sundown—no food or drink.

Ninth Day of Ridvan: Baha'i celebration of the arrival of Baha'u'llah at a sacred garden.

Nirvana day (Buddhist): Regional observance of the death of Buddha.

Noche Buena: Christian Latino Christmas Eve family celebration.

Norooz (The New Day): Zoroastrian New Year.

Nuzulul Qur'an (Laylat-al-Qadr): Islamic Night of Power during final days of Ramadan. A night spent in worship to mark the first revelation of the Qur'an.

Obon Festival: Japanese Buddhist festival to honour deceased ancestors. Involves lighting of bonfires, traditional meals, paper lanterns, folk dances.

Oh-harai-taisai (Shinto): Grand Purification Ceremony to obtain purification from offenses committed during the first half of the year.

Oh-harai-taisai: Shinto Grand Purification Ceremony. Observed twice yearly to obtain purification from offenses committed during each half of the year.

Orthodox Sunday: Orthodox Christian first sunday of Lent. Restoration of icons to the church is celebrated.

Ostara (Wiccan): Welcoming of spring and welcoming of goddess-as-maiden.

Ostara: Wicca welcoming of spring and the goddess-as-maiden.

Paitishahem Gahambar (Zoroastrian): Festival commemorating the creation of the earth and the harvesting of summer crops.

Paitishahem Gahambar: Zoroastrian festival commemorating the creation of the earth and the harvesting of summer crops.

Palm Sunday (Christian): Celebration of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, beginning Holy Week; Observed by worship celebrations and parades using palm branches.

Palm Sunday: Christian celebration of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The day begins Holy Week. It is observed by worship celebrations and parades using palm branches.

Parinirvana: Buddhist observance of the entry of Buddha into the final nirvana—a state of complete detachment.

Paryushana (Jain): Eight-day festival signifying human emergence into a new world of spiritual and moral refinement; Observance marked by recitations from sacred writings and family exchange of cards and letters.

Paryushana Parva: Jain 8 day festival signifying human emergence into a new world of spiritual and moral refinement. Marked by

recitations from Jain sacred writing and family exchange of cards and letters. Celebration of the natural qualities of the soul. The 8th day (Samvatsari) is most important and is focused on forgiveness.

Passover (Pesach): Eight-day commemoration of the deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt; Observed by recounting the story of the Exodus and the ongoing struggle of all peoples for freedom from internal and external tyranny is celebrated.

Passover: Jewish 8-day celebration of the deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt. The story of the Exodus is recounted, and the ongoing struggle of all peoples for freedom from internal and external tyranny is celebrated. A special meal is a central feature.

Pavarana Day: A Buddhist festival marking the end of the Rains Retreat, primarily observed by monks in monasteries.

Pentecost (Christian): Observation of the day when the Holy Spirit came to the disciples in the forms of tongues of fire and rushing wind; Traditional day for baptism and confirmation of new Christians.

Pentecost: Christian observation of the day when the God the Holy Spirit came to the disciples in the forms of tongues of fire and rushing wind. It is a traditional day for baptism and confirmation of new Christians.

Pioneer Day (Mormon): Observation of arrival of first settlers at Great Salt Lake on July 24, 1847 C.E.

Posadas Perpetual (Navideñas): Hispanic Christian feast of The Lodgings commemorating the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem in preparation for the birth of Jesus.

Prashad (pra SHOD): A Sikh bread—made of wheat, flour, sugar, and water —served at the gurudwara during worship.

Precious Blood of Jesus: Christian (Roman Catholic) veneration of the life giving power of the blood of Jesus.

Presentation of Jesus: Christian remembrance of the infant Jesus being brought to the temple in Jerusalem. His Godly presence was recognised. Celebrate at worship services.

Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Catholic Christian honouring of Mary who was brought to the temple at age 3 for education.

Prophet Elias Day (Orthodox Christianity): Honours the holy prophet of Elias.

Purim (Jewish): Celebration of the deliverance of the Jewish minority in Persia from genocide; Observed by charity to the poor, sharing food with friends, and vigorous merrymaking.

Purim: Jewish celebration of the deliverance of the Jewish minority in Persia from genocide. Charity to the poor, sharing food with friends, and vigorous merry-making mark the observance.

Qu'ran (ko RAN or ko RAHN): The book, written in the Arabic language, containing the divine revelations of Allah received by the Prophet Muhammad.

Rain Retreat Observance (Buddhist): Marks the time when the Sangha, or specialists of spiritual life, retreats for collective study and meditation.

Raksha Bandhan: Hindu festival honouring the loving ties between brothers and sister in a family.

Rama Krishna Jayanti (Sri Krishna Jayanati): Hindu celebration of the birthday of Sri Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Krishna. Sweets, fruits and milk products are available in abundance.

Ramadan (Muslim): Month for commemorating Muhammad's reception of the divine revelation recorded in the Qur'an; This holiest period of the Muslimic year is observed by strict fasting from sunrise to sunset.

Ramadan Mubarak (RAH ma don moo BAR ak): Muslim greeting at the beginning of Ramadan which means, "Have a blessed and happy Ramadan!"

Ramadan: 9th month on Islamic calendar, devoted to the commemoration of Muhammad's reception of the divine revelation recorded in the Qur'an. The event begins when authorities in Saudi Arabia sight the new moon of the 9th month. It is the holiest period of the Islamic Year. There is strict fasting from sunrise to sunset.

Ramanavami (Hindu): Celebration of the birth of Rama, hero of the religious epic poem, The Ramayana; Observance involves telling of stories and going to the temple.

Ramanavmi: Hindu celebration of the birth of Lord Rama, hero of the religious epic poem, The Ramayana. The day involves telling of stories and going to the temple.

Ramayana(rah ma YAH NA): An epic poem from India that tells the whole story of Lord Rama who had been in exile for fourteen

years. According to the poem, the people of Ayodhya (in northern India) lit hundred of lamps in honour of his return. Hindus celebrate his return each year during Diwali.

Reformation Day (Christian): Anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant reformation on Oct 31, 1517 C.E. when Martin Luther posted a belief statement on Wittenberg Church door.

Reformation Day: Protestant Christian anniversary of their tradition and its emphasis on the place of the Bible and religious freedom. On October 31, 1517 C.E. Martin Luther posted a belief statement on Wittenberg Church door.

Ridvan (Baha'i): Commemoration of the twelve-day period in 1863 C.E. when Baha'u declared that he was God's messenger for this age; Observed by suspension of work on the first, ninth and twelfth days of the festival.

Ridvan (RID van): The "Garden of Paradise" in which Baha'u'llah gathered the followers of the Bab and revealed to them that he was the Promised One of whom the Bab had spoken.

Ridvan: Baha'i commemoration of the twelve day period in 1863 when Baha'u'llah declared that he was God's messenger for this age. Work is to be suspended on days 1, 9, and 12 of the festival.

Rogation Sunday: Christian occasion to ask God to bless the land for growing crops and to also ask forgiveness of sins.

Rohatsu: Buddhist celebration of the enlightenment of Buddha.

Rosh Hashanah (Jewish): New Year; Observance is marked by a time of introspection, abstinence, prayer and penitence; The story of Abraham is read, the ram's horn is sounded, and special foods are prepared and shared.

Rosh Hashanah: Jewish New Year. A time of introspection, abstinence, prayer and penitence. The story of Abraham is read, the ram's horn is sounded, and special foods are prepared and shared.

Sacred Heart (Roman Catholic): Occasion to pay homage to Christ's all-encompassing love for humanity; Observed with solemn worship.

Sacred Heart: Christian (Roman Catholic) occasion to pay homage to Christ's all encompassing love for humanity. Solemn worship is observed.

Sadeh (Jashan-e Sadeh): Zoroastrian mid winter celebration in which a bonfire is often used to express defiance of the cold of winter.

Saint Andrew's Day: Christian observance of the coming of Christianity to the area now know as Scotland. The martyrdom of St Andrew is remembered as the season of Advent is about to begin.

Saint Benedict Day (Catholic): Recognition of the father of the Western Church Monastic tradition, The Benedictine Order.

Saint Benedict Day: Catholic Christian recognition of the father of the The Benedictine Order. It was the first Order of the Western Church Monastic tradition and lived by the Benedictine Rule.

Saint Blaze Day: Christian, primarily Catholic and Orthodox, honoured of a 4th century saint by blessing the throats of believers.

Saint Brighid of Kildare: Christian recognition of Brighid who displayed unusual compassion. She was brought up as a Druid and became Christian.

Saint Columba of Iona: Christian recognition of Columba who began the famous community of Iona off the coast of Scotland in 563.

Saint David of Wales: Celtic Christian saint known for his wisdom and missionary work.

Saint Francis Day (Catholic): Recognition of the founder of the Franciscan Monastic Order; Service to people and appreciation for the natural creation are marks of the Order.

Saint Francis Day: Christian recognition of service to people and appreciation of the natural world, as practiced by St Francis and the Franciscan Monastic Order which he founded.

Saint George Day: Christian remembrance of a person who, in the 4th century, was a martyr and became an ideal of martial valor and selflessness. Legend of killing a dragon is connected with this patron saint of England.

Saint James Day (Christian): Recognition of the martyrdom of the Apostle James the Great in 44 C.E.

Saint John the Baptist: Christian remembrance of the birth of St. John the Baptist who announced the coming of Jesus.

Saint John the Evangelist: Christian remembrance of the birth of St. John the Evangelist of the early church.

Saint Joseph's Day: Christian remembrance of Joseph, husband of Mary the mother of Jesus.

Saint Luke Apostle and Evangelist (Anglican Christian): Recognises St. Luke, Apostle of Jesus Christ and Evangelist; He was one of the authors of the four canonical gospels.

Saint Luke's Day: Christian remembrance of Luke, disciple of Jesus.

Saint Matthew Day: Christian remembrance Matthew—apostle, evangelist and martyr of the first century.

Saint Matthew, Apostle, and Evangelist (Anglican Christian): Honours St. Matthew, Apostle of Jesus Christ and an Evangelist; He was also one of the authors of the four canonical gospels.

Saint Michael and All Angels (Christian): Celebration of angels as companions who help fight off the power of evil and who are present at the hour of death.

Saint Michael and All Angels: Christian celebration of angels as companions who help fight off the power of evil and who are present at the hour of death.

Saint Nicolas Day: Christian celebration of the birth of Saint Nicolas, patron saint of children and role model for gift giving. Many churches named for this saint who is also the Dutch version of Santa Claus.

Saint Patrick's Day: Christian celebration of Patrick who brought Christianity to Ireland in early days of the faith.

Saint Peter Day: Catholic Christian honouring of the disciple chosen by Jesus to give leadership to the church.

Saint Philip the Apostle and St James the Less: Catholic Christian remembrance of two disciples of Jesus.

Saint Stephen's Day (Christian): Remembrance of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr.

Saint Stephen's Day: Christian remembrance of St Stephen, the first Christian martyr.

Saint Thomas Apostle (Anglican Christian): Recognises the spiritual work of St. Thomas.

Saint Thomas Day: Christian remembrance of the Apostle of Jesus who traveled east toward India and is now the Patron Saint of India and Pakistan.

Saint Valentine's Day: Christian celebration of the love of God presented in Jesus and in the lives of Christian believers. St Valentine was a 3rd century martyr. This day is widely observed in the USA as a secular celebration of love.

Samhain (Wiccan): Celebration of endings and beginnings; Observed by reverence of elders.

Samhain: Wicca celebration of endings and beginnings and of remembering the dead. Revering of elders is also observed.

Sangha (SANG a): The community of Buddhist monks and nuns.

Setsubun-sai: Shinto celebration of the change of seasons with the coming of spring with shouts of "Devils out, Good Fortune in". Bean throwing protects against demons.

Setsunbun-sai (Shinto): Family celebration of the coming of spring with shouts of "Devils out, Fortune in".

Sha'ban (shah BAHN): The month preceding Ramadan in the Islamic calendar.

Shabbat (Sha BAHT): The Jewish Sabbath which begins at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday. Worship services are held in the synagogue on Friday evening and Saturday morning.

Shavuot (Jewish): Celebration of Moses' descent from Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments; Plants and flowers are used in decorations.

Shavuot: Jewish celebration of Moses' descent from Mt Sinai with the ten commandments. Plants and flowers are used in decorations.

Shemini Azteret: Jewish completion of the annual cycle of reading of the Torah.

Shiva (SHEE va): Hindu god, the Destroyer.

Shivarat or Mahasivaratri (Hindu): Worship of Shiva with flowers.

Shogatsu (Gantan-sai): Shinto New Year's Day celebration.

Shree Krishan Jayanti (Janmastami): Hindu celebration of the physical courage and mental brilliance of Krishna, great savior and founder of *dharma,* the religious and moral law of Hinduism.

Shrove Tuesday: Christian carnival day on the eve of Ash Wednesday which begins Lent, a time of fasting and devotions. Pancakes are often served. It is also known as Fat Tuesday in some places.

Shubun-sai: Shinto vernal equinox observance.

Siddhartha (sid Aar tha): Siddhartha Gautama became the Buddha after his enlightenment.

Sikh (SEEK): A person who follows or adheres to the teachings of Sikhism.

Simchat Torah (Jewish): Day to celebrate the reading of the Law; Observed with Synagogue services involving readings, processions and blessing of the children.

Singh (SING): In Sikhism, the name Singh, which means "lion," is added to the name of every man initiated into the Khalsa. The name Kauai, meaning assistant, is added to women's names.

Slichot: Jewish worship service to begin making repentance for wrongs done the past year.

Spring Ohijon (Buddhist): Meditation on the teachings of Buddha at the equinox.

Sri Guru Granth (sree GUH roo GRANTH): The Sikh name for their holy scriptures.

Sri Ramakrishna Jayanti: Hindu celebration of the life of Sri Ramakrishna whose life was a constant contemplation of God. He exemplified the best in seers of India.

St. John Apostle and Evangelist (Christian): Recognises the spiritual work of St. John.

Suhoor (soo HORE): A light meal, like bread and fruit, eaten by Muslims before sunrise during the month of Ramadan. During Ramadan, Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset each day.

Sukkot (Jewish): Feast of Tabernacles celebrating the harvest and the wandering of Israel in the wilderness dwelling in tents.

Sukkot: Jewish Feast of Tabernacles which celebrates the harvest and the protection of the people of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness dwelling in tents. Temporary dwelling places have leaves for a roof so the sky can be seen. In temperate climates, night is spent in the Succoth.

Synagogue (SIN a gog): A Jewish place of worship and education.

Tammuz, Seventeenth (Jewish): Traditional day of fasting to mourn over Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple.

Tammuz, Seventeenth of : Jewish traditional day of fasting to mourn over Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. Not universally observed.

Thanksgiving: Interfaith celebration of the created earth. Celebrated in the USA.

Theophany (Feast of...): Orthodox Christian celebration of the Baptism of Jesus, at which time the Trinity was revealed to the world.

Tiragan: Zoroastrian celebration in honour of Tishtat—the Dog Star. Recognises dogs as helpers of humanity. May involve splashing people with water.

Tisha be-Av (Jewish): Day of fasting in remembrance of the destruction of the Temple in 516 B.C.E and 70 C.E.

Tishah B'av: A Jewish day of fasting in remembrance of the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C.E. and 70 C.E.

Tohji-Taisai: Shinto Grand Ceremony of the Winter Solstice.

Torah (TOR a): The Jewish Books of the Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Torah means "teaching" and is, in part, a record of God's covenant and the implications of the covenant for human life in society.

Transfiguration of Jesus (Christian): Commemoration of the experience on Mt. Tabor when Jesus' physical appearance became brilliant as his connection with traditional Jewish holy figures became evident to the disciples.

Trinity Sunday or Day (Christian): Honouring the belief in one God with a threefold nature.

Triodion: Orthodox Christian time period leading up to Lent. The liturgy involves hymns, odes and scriptures.

Tu B'Av: Jewish celebration of romance between couples.

Tu B'shevat (Jewish): Celebration of the coming of spring; Observed by preparation of foods native to Israel.

Tu B'shevat: Jewish celebration of the coming of spring by preparation of foods native to Israel. It is also known as "New Year for Trees"— a method for determining the age of trees for tithing purposes.

Tulsedas Jayanti (Hindu): Remembrance of the poet Tulsedas as one who brought spiritual uplift to the masses of people

Twelfth Night: Christian observance of the close of Christmastide.

Ugadi (ugAdhi): Hindu New Years Day for Telugu people and those of Andhra Pradesh. It is said that Lord Braham began the creation on this day. It is one of at least eight New Year observances in regions on India.

Ullambana (Buddhist): Celebration of the ritual of saving the deceased from torments after death.

Vaisakhi (Hindu and Sikh): Solar new year — the most important holy day of the year for Sikhs; Observed by temple worship, feasting and dancing.

Vaisakhi (Baisakhi): Hindu solar new year. For Sikhs the day remembers Guru Gobind Singh and the founding of the militant

fraternity of Sikhs named Khalsa. The day is observed by temple worship, feasting and dancing.

Vasant Panchami (Hindu): Festival of spring honouring the goddess of learning; Observed by the wearing of bright clothing.

Vasant Panchami: Hindu celebration dedicated to Saraswati, goddess of learning.

Veda(VEE da): The Vedas are a Hindu collection of ancient hymns and chants recited orally in verse. Each Veda has an associated literature called Brahmanas (rituals) and Upanishads (explorations of deeper understandings of the universe). Veda can also mean more generally the wisdom and authority of the whole Hindu tradition.

Vijaya Dashami (Hinduism): Commemorates the day of victory over Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, by Lord Ram; it denotes victory over evil.

Visakha Puja: Buddhist marking of the birth, enlightenment and death (attainment of Nirvana) of Lord Buddha.

Vishnu (VISH nu): Hindu god, the Sustainer.

Vivekananda Jayanti: Hindu celebration of the birthday of Swami Vivekenanda who was dedicated to bridging the gap between east and west.

Waqf al Arafa: Islamic observance day during Hajj when pilgrims pray for forgiveness and mercy.

Watch Night: Christian occasion to thank God for bringing people safely through another year. Developed by the African American community in the USA at the time of Emancipation (1863).

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (Christian): Celebration for the restoration of unity between the churches.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: Christian observance with prayer for the restoration of unity between the churches of the faith.

Wesak (Buddhist): Holiest day, it celebrates Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death.

Wesak: Holiest of Buddhist holy days. It celebrates Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death. It is a public holiday in some countries.

Whitsunday: Alternate name for Pentecost, the Christian celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the community of the faithful. White robes are used in worship.

Winter Feast (American Indian): Commemorates the Winter solstice with private contemplation and feast.

Winter Lent: Orthodox Christian season of preparation for the Nativity of Christ.

World Communion Sunday: Protestant Christian observation of the unity of Christians in celebration of the last supper of Jesus with the disciples.

World Religion Day: Baha'i sponsored day dedicated to the unity and oneness of all world religions.

Yom Hashoah (Jewish): Holocaust Day — This day has been established to remember the six million Jews killed by the Nazis in 1933-45 C.E.; Observed by many non-Jews as well.

Yom Kippur (Jewish): Day of Atonement — holiest day of the Jewish year observed with strict fasting and ceremonial repentance.

Yule (Wiccan): Celebration of winter-born king symbolised by rebirth of the sun.

Yule: A Christian celebration of the light dawning in Jesus. Also a Norse pagan celebration of the winter-born king, symbolised by the rebirth of the sun. A present day Wicca event.

Zak-at-ul-Fitr (Zack-at-ul-FITR): A special offering given by Muslims for those in need.

Zarathosht Diso: Zoroastrian anniversary of the death of Prophet Zarathushtra.

Zartosht Deso (Zoroastrianism): Commemorates the death of their Prophet Zarathushtra.

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