

January 31, 2022

Dear siblings in Christ and dear relatives in humanity,

We join our voices together to endorse the annual United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week (February 1–7) and to encourage you to observe this week in ways that are meaningful for your local context. Our churches are committed to pursuing friendship, peace, and common cause with our neighbours of diverse spiritual and religious beliefs.

World Interfaith Harmony Week was first established in 2010 through the inspiration of King Abdullah and Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan. At its heart is the shared conviction that the deepest dictates of many religious and spiritual communities call on their followers, each in their own ways, to turn “Love of God” and “Love of God” into actions that express “Love of Neighbour.” The vision for World Interfaith Harmony Week was that if people of faith across the globe could be encouraged to dedicate one week a year to an intentional reflection on the principles and precepts of their own traditions that promote values of respect, tolerance, and care for the other, this could make a significant difference to promoting the peace and wellbeing of the world in the face of all its great turmoil.

We are just one month into 2022 and already it is clear that the need for this kind of vision is as urgent as ever: Ecological crisis, endemic racism, religious bigotry, political and economic upheaval, refugee crisis, a still-evolving viral pandemic, natural disasters, wars and rumours of wars, and so on; all of these are sources of great challenge and suffering in our human community and the community of creation. Harmony among faith communities will not bring an end to these struggles; but when we know and love our neighbours across the lines of religious difference, we find an increased capacity to work together to bind up the wounds and do justice for the broken hearts.

All of this can sound rather daunting, because, frankly, it is. However, for most of us, engaging in inter-faith dialogue is not something that is going to begin with giant leaps, but rather with small steps: Talk to your neighbours and coworkers and ask them to help you learn; find out where the places of worship are in your community and send them a note of simple friendship; make a point of taking note of the festivals and holy days of other traditions and find out what they celebrate. These are ways to make a start, while being prayerfully open to where the Spirit leads you next for conversations and relationships.

If you are moved to go deeper, there are lots of ways to do that too. This list of resources with points of connection to our Anglican and Lutheran communities is one place to look for support:

- Reflect on the principles and suggestions contained the ELCIC’s resource [Encountering People of Other Faiths](#) and how you might act on them in your context
- Take a look at the ACoC’s [Guidelines for Interfaith Dialogue](#) and [Guidelines on worship involving Christians and people of other faith traditions](#) and consider what ideas and possibilities they raise
- Plan a local event (online and/or with health protocols as necessary) using this resource kit prepared by the UN: [How to Participate in World Interfaith Harmony Week](#)
- Review the resource materials collected in our new ACoC/ELCIC Common Word Canada website designed to encourage and support grassroots Christian-Muslim dialogues: [A Common Word Canada](#)
- Research the Anglican Communion’s study document the theological basis for Christian engagement in interfaith relations, [Generous Love: The Truth of the Gospel and the Call to Dialogue](#)
- Explore a recent set of essays authored by Lutheran scholars on interreligious learning produced by the Lutheran World Federation, [Loving Your Neighbour: Encouraging Constructive Interfaith Engagement](#)
- Get connected to the work of the [Canadian Interfaith Conversation](#), in which leaders in our two churches regularly participate alongside many others

In whatever form the interfaith vocation takes for you, we invite you to be inspired in these coming days, anew or afresh, by the vision of World Interfaith Harmony Week — to show our love of God, above all, through the love of all our diverse neighbours. And please join us this week in praying these words:

O God, Creator of all; as disciples of your Son Jesus Christ, we see and know the depth of your heart to reach out in peace to all people. Help us to demonstrate the boundless love and welcome you give to all your children. Enrich our knowledge of you by seeing you through the eyes and faith of others. Reveal to us the common ground from which we can together serve the common good. We ask this together with all those who hallow your holy name. Amen.



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