

this context we affirm a trust in other religious communities in their commitment to salvation. We value the actions they are taking to liberate, harmonize, and renew the human family. We treasure the insights, methods, and experiences which contribute to the deepening of our Christian faith.

If there is no salvation outside the church, we reject such a salvation for ourselves. We come to this notion of the salvation of others through being loved by God in Christ.

It does not seem possible that an all-loving God should deny salvation to millions. We therefore affirm that God is present in grace to all humanity.

We therefore enter into dialogue with others, confident that they, too, are encompassed by God's love.

We affirm that Jesus calls us... to love others as God loves us. We recognize that such love must accept and affirm the other, but also that this does not preclude an honest, critical stance toward the other.



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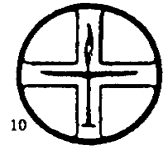
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| 1 Buddhist | 7 Native |
| 2 Bahá'í | 8 Christian |
| 3 Hindu | 9 Zoroastrian |
| 4 Jewish | 10 Unitarian |
| 5 Muslim | 11 Jain |
| 6 Sikh | |

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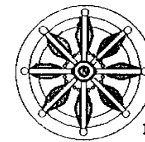


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United Church Statements on Interfaith Dialogue



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People of many different religions live side by side in our local neighbourhoods, work places and even within some families. In the "global village" it is no longer possible to avoid being deeply involved with people of other faith.

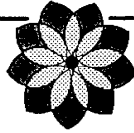
What should Christians do in this situation? What does faithfulness require in a multicultural society?

The United Church has made some statements on the matter in the past and will no doubt speak about it again as our understanding and experience grows.

In 1936 the General Council approved a statement that said in part:

"I am not come to destroy but to fulfill" indicates the correct attitude of Christianity to non-Christian religions. There are elements in non-Christian religions which are common to Christianity, other elements which might find their fulfillment in the Christian faith and others which are contrary to the fundamental genius of Christianity. While maintaining the supremacy of Christ, the Christian should exhibit toleration, a genuine desire to understand and appreciate and a willingness to co-operate, where co-operation is possible, with sincere men and women of other faiths.

(Report of the Special Committee on Policy appointed by the Board of Foreign Mission and the Women's Missionary Society)



By 1966, in the *Report of the Commission on World Mission*, the United Church recognized that the whole religious history of the world “is entering a new phase”, namely, a time of religious pluralism in which awareness of the faith of others is unavoidable, a time in which people of all religions face great world problems in common. The report concludes that there is “no alternative to mutual planning in a spirit of compatibility.”

The 1966 Report includes a section entitled “Rethinking the Relationship Between Christianity and Other Faiths, and the Uniqueness of Christianity.” Here it was suggested that we should “welcome the religious plurality of the modern world” because it encourages dialogue which is “one of the conditions in which effective mission becomes possible.”

Dialogue, it said, “may be of value to the Christian mission by driving the Christian back to a better understanding of Christian faith.” It will ensure an ongoing process of “involvement and transformation.”

On the uniqueness of Christ, the Report of 1966 suggested that the problem with the traditional interpretation of Christ’s uniqueness “probably stems from the Greek element in our thought rather than from the Hebrew.” If we could dissociate our presentations of Christ from western (Greek) cultural interpretations it might “allow [Christ] to assume the dress in which He can speak most meaningfully to people brought up in other ways.”

We can “confidently expect” that dialogue between Christian and non-Christian “will not diminish but enhance our estimate of the significance of Christ.”

The final recommendations of the 1966 Report led to the establishment of a portfolio for Interfaith Dialogue in the Division of World Outreach. The Recommendation on Relations with other Religious Communities reads as follows:



The Church should recognize that God is creatively and redemptively at work in the religious life of all people.

Christians have much to learn, as well as to contribute, through dialogue with people of other faiths. Their special responsibility is to present the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus in humble and sincere dialogue in ways which will respect each other’s integrity.

We recommend

a) that our church actively pursue, both informally and formally,

- opportunities and occasions for dialogue with representatives of other faiths;
- b) that the General Council instruct its Executive to find or create suitable means for achieving this purpose.

In 1977 the General Council in Calgary received the *The Lordship of Jesus* report of the Committee on Christian Faith. This report was widely studied in the United Church. Some of its main statements about interfaith dialogue are the following:

We have no warrant to proclaim the religious life [of the world] out of bounds for God.

Not to be with humanity in its religious life is a failure in discipleship; a denial in practice of the lordship of Jesus.

In the contemporary situation, dialogue is a better model than proclamation to suggest the disciples’ call to participate in life.

Even in the realm of religion, there is no reason for the community of faith to withhold praise where praise is due.

The community will have both a “yes” and a “no” to say to the representatives of any specific religious tradition - including the Christian.

The fact that, in relation to representatives of other religious traditions, we might learn something new is simply confirmation of our faith that it is the Lord who precedes us into the world of our discipleship.

Finally, in 1983 the United Church held a Consultation on Interfaith Dialogue at Naramata, B.C. While its report was not an official statement of the whole United Church it does represent the thinking of a group of about fifty lay people, clergy and professors from all across the country. The report on the Consultation included the following statements:

Our contact with other traditions is revealing the limits and exclusiveness of our previous periods of growth, as well as an appreciation of our past.

God invites us to new forms of participation, trust and growth. In

