

Response to “A Common Word Between Us and You”

We in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod receive “A Common Word Between Us and You” with thanksgiving. In a world tragically filled with violence and hatred the invitation of “A Common Word” to work for greater peace and harmony between Muslims and Christians is most welcome.

“A Common Word” invites Christians and Muslims to move beyond the sound bytes and engage in a serious study of their respective faiths. Its exposition of the Muslim teachings about love for God and one’s neighbor will help Christians grow in their understanding of these basic beliefs of Islam. Its exposition of the Christian teachings about love for God and one’s neighbor illustrates a deep understanding of these beliefs on the part of the Muslim scholars and clerics who wrote and signed “A Common Word.” The commands to love God and the neighbor are found in all of the Abrahamic traditions – as is noted by the quotations in “A Common Word” which come from Moses and the prophets, the Apostles of Jesus Christ, and the Qur’an.

With the authors of “A Common Word,” we are also grieved that some today use religion to promote discord and division. Violence and hatred exercised in the name of religion are misuses and violations of religion itself which turn faith and religious fervor into the opposite of their original purpose. With the signers of “A Common Word” we desire to live “in righteousness and good works.” We pray that we would “respect each other, be fair, just and kind to” one another, and that we would in love “live in sincere peace, harmony and mutual goodwill” with our fellow Christians and Muslims throughout the world. With the signers of “A Common Word” we desire that all people living in every land would be able to exercise “freedom of religion” without fear, coercion, or the threat of violence for their beliefs.

It is true that Christians and Muslims believe that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, that He performed miracles, that He was pure/faultless, and is called the Word of God and the Messiah. (Qur’an 3:42, 45-51, 59; 4:157, 171-172; 5:11; 6:85; 19:16-34; Isaiah 7:14; 53:11; Jeremiah 23:6; Matthew 1:18-25; 8:14-17; John 1:1, 40-42; 1 Peter 2:22-24; 3:15, 18) Though these teachings are jointly affirmed, “A Common Word” recognizes that Muslims and Christians do not see Jesus in the same way. Christians confess Jesus as the risen Lord and God, the second person of the Trinity. “A Common Word” invites Christians and Muslims to discuss what they believe in common about love for God and the neighbor. From that common ground Muslims and Christians can begin discussing other religious positions which are not shared. We welcome the invitation of the signers of “A Common Word” to be involved in studies that will bring about greater respect and understanding of our common beliefs and our differences, and greater peace and harmony between Christians and Muslims. With the signers of “A Common Word” we too desire that our differences would “not cause hatred and strife between us.”

Christians and Muslims who come together to speak and discuss matters of faith with a frank and open spirit will learn greater respect for one another. Let us strive to walk together in civility and respect that will bring about greater harmony and understanding between Muslims and Christians for the good of the world.

“‘Come now, let us reason together,’ says the Lord.” (Isaiah 1:18)

Adopted by the CTCR
April 25, 2009