

Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide

Building Bridges

The Catholic Church in Adelaide
seeking to promote
friendship and mutual understanding
with Muslims



The Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide has sponsored interfaith relationships for many years.
Photograph details Page 24.

CONTENTS

1 Pastoral Letter from Archbishop Philip Wilson to the Adelaide Archdiocese

2 Vatican II and Papal statements on Christian Muslim relations

3 The Call to Christian-Muslim Dialogue

4 Mission Statement and outline of suggested program

5 About Muslims and Islam - in Australia/South Australia:

5.1 Basic demographic facts and statistics 'A snapshot'

5.2 List of mosque locations in South Australia

5.3 Essential beliefs and practices: 'A Background Brief on Muslims in Australia'

5.4 Islam and Mary (Maryam) – Mary in the Qur'an.

6 Resources for Approaching Interfaith Dialogue:

6.1 Prayer – the foundation of interfaith dialogue

6.2 Importance of Interfaith Dialogue

6.3 Interfaith Dialogue – How Can We Go About It?

6.4 Guidelines for Interfaith Dialogue

6.5 Ten Rules for Interfaith Dialogue

6.6 Social aspects to be aware of when with our Muslim sisters and brothers.

7 Other resources: A list of useful books, articles, websites etc.

This document and related articles will be available to view via the Adelaide Catholic Archdiocesan website at www.adelaide.catholic.org.au from July 2008



Most Rev Philip Wilson DD JCL
Archbishop of Adelaide
Catholic Church Office
GPO Box 1364
Adelaide 5001
39 Wakefield Street
Adelaide SA 5000
Facsimile: 08 8223 2307

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Australia is a nation of diversity. We embrace people of different cultures and faiths. We recognize all that is true and good in them.

I am writing now to tell you about a new program, **Building Bridges** – building bridges of friendship and understanding with Muslims who are living within the area of the Archdiocese.

Pope Paul VI wrote a landmark Encyclical Letter over 40 years ago, *Populorum Progressio*. He reminded us of the Church's duty of 'shedding the light of the gospel on the social concerns of our time.'¹ Two years earlier, the Second Vatican Council, produced a ground-breaking document on interfaith relations, *Nostra Aetate*. It proclaimed the Church's 'great esteem' for Muslims and called upon all people to 'strive sincerely for mutual understanding'.²

Our nation and our world need this mutual understanding now more than ever. This is one of the great social concerns of our time.

Pope Benedict XVI has said that interreligious and intercultural dialogue between Christians and Muslims is a 'vital necessity, on which in large measure our future depends'³. He urges all to 'look to what unites us'. And he asks us to strive to 'cooperate in a productive way in the areas of culture and society, and for the promotion of justice and peace... throughout the world'⁴.

As the Vatican Council pointed out, we Catholics have a high regard for the Muslim people. They worship the living God, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth. They do not share our beliefs about the Son of God. But they venerate Jesus Christ and they honour his virgin Mother and the role of prayer is of the highest significance for them. Together we can promote our shared ideals of peace, liberty, social justice and moral values.

I have asked members of our Catholic community to create a program that will help us understand Islam and get to know Muslim people. We can build bridges with Muslim Australians. Getting to know each other includes treating each other with great respect and listening to each other attentively and sensitively.

I recognise and warmly affirm all the Christian-Muslim initiatives and interactions already undertaken by members of the Archdiocese – and the overtures the Muslim community has made to us. I now invite you to further reflection, outreach and action in this most important area.

I commend the 'Building Bridges' program to you. That includes the resources provided by the Standing Committee Christian-Muslim Relations of the Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission.

We're called to promote unity and charity between people and nations. Let's do everything we can to build bridges of understanding and friendship.

Yours sincerely,

Most Rev Philip Wilson DD JCL
Archbishop of Adelaide

¹ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 1967, n. 2

² Vatican Council II, *Nostra Aetate*, 1965, n. 3

³ Pope Benedict XVI, Meeting with Muslim representatives in Rome, 25 September 2006.

⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, Letter of Response to Muslim Scholars' letter, 19 November 2007
A Common Word between Us and You, 13 October 2007.

INTERFAITH RELATIONS WITH MUSLIMS

A Journey with Pope John Paul II

We also appreciate the Muslims who adore one God who they believe acts with mercy and power who is our Creator and Sustainer'

Nostra Aetate, n. 3 (1965)
'Vatican II in Plain English', Huebsch

I believe that we Christians and Muslims must recognize with joy the religious values that we have in common, and give thanks to God for them. Both of us believe in one God, the only God, who is all justice and all mercy, we believe in the importance of prayer, of fasting, of almsgiving, of repentance and of pardon; we believe that God will be a merciful judge to us at the end of time, and we hope that after the resurrection he will be satisfied with us and we know that we will be satisfied with him.

I believe that today, God invites us to change our old practices. We must respect each other, and we must also stimulate each other in good works on the path of God. On this path, you are assured of the esteem and the collaboration of your Catholic brothers and sisters whom I represent among you this evening.

John Paul II to the Muslim Youth of Morocco, August 1985

The truth is that interreligious contacts, together with ecumenical dialogue, now seem to be obligatory paths, in order to ensure that the many painful wounds inflicted over the course of centuries will not be repeated, and indeed that any such wounds still remaining will soon be healed.

Your work contributes to the fulfillment of what I have always considered a very important part of my ministry: the fostering of more friendly relations with the followers of other religious traditions.

John Paul II to Pontifical Commission for Interreligious Relations, November 1992

There are some who claim that religion is part of the problem, blocking humanity's way to true peace and prosperity..... (But) *religion and peace go together*; to wage war in the name of religion is a blatant contradiction. The task before us, therefore, is to *promote a culture of dialogue*.

I have always believed that religious leaders have a vital role to play in nurturing that hope of justice and peace without which there will be no future worthy of humanity.

John Paul II Closing Ceremony of Interreligious Assembly, Rome, November 1999

The Catholic Church wishes to pursue a sincere and fruitful interreligious dialogue with the members of the Jewish faith and followers of Islam. Such a dialogue is not an attempt to impose our views upon others. What it demands of all of us is that, holding to what we believe, we listen respectfully to one another, seek to discern all that is good and holy in each other's teachings, and cooperate in supporting everything that favours mutual understanding and peace.

John Paul II, Address to Christian, Jewish and Muslim Leaders in Jerusalem, March 2000

Source: Columban Centre for Christian Muslim Relations, Sydney

'We also appreciate the Muslims who adore one God who they believe acts with mercy and power who is our Creator and Sustainer'

Nostra Aetate, n.3 (1965)
'Vatican II in Plain English'
Huebsch

CALL TO CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DIALOGUE

1. When the Second Vatican Council declared in 1965 in *Nostra Aetate* that the Church has a 'high regard' for Muslim believers¹, a new beginning in Christian-Muslim relations was inaugurated.² In the past, while there have been times of mutually enriching cultural interaction between the two communities, there has also been much conflict. For the future, the sacred Council urged Christians and Muslims together 'to strive sincerely for mutual understanding' and, for the benefit of humanity, to 'make common cause of safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace and freedom'³.
2. To promote this new attitude of dialogue (with Islam) among Catholics, the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions which later became the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PDIC) was established in 1965. Its first task was scholarly and reflective, so that 'false ideas might be dispelled and prejudices overcome'.⁴ Working together with many high-level Muslim representatives and groups over the past forty years, much mutual progress has been made.
3. Continuing on this journey of 'establishing bridges of friendship', in spite of the difficulties of our times, Pope Benedict XVI has reaffirmed the Church's desire 'to strengthen the bonds of friendship and solidarity between the Holy See and Muslim communities throughout the world.'⁵
4. Emphasising its importance, Pope Benedict has declared that 'interreligious and intercultural dialogue between Christians and Muslims cannot be reduced to an optional extra. It is, in fact, a vital necessity, on which in large measure our future depends.' The Church therefore wishes to develop further the sincere and respectful dialogue already begun. It wishes to base this progress on 'ever more authentic reciprocal knowledge which, with joy, recognises the religious values that we have in common and, with loyalty, respects the differences.'⁶
5. For their part, influential Muslim scholars, in their Open Letter of October 2006 to Pope Benedict XVI have reciprocated this desire: '...We share your desire for frank and sincere dialogue, and recognise its importance in an increasingly interconnected world. Upon this sincere and frank dialogue we hope to continue to build peaceful and friendly relationships based upon mutual respect, justice, and what is common in essence in our shared Abrahamic tradition, particularly "the two greatest commandments" (Mark 12:29-31)'.⁷
6. Our communities take heart, too, from further high-level exchange of letters. In their October 2007 Letter to Pope Benedict XVI and other Christian Leaders, Islamic scholars invited further dialogue, noting that universal peace and 'perhaps the very survival of the world itself' depended on it. The scholars extended an open invitation to Christians to unite with Muslims worldwide on the two essential tenets of both faiths: love of God and love of neighbour.⁸ In responding with deep appreciation, Pope Benedict reiterated his earlier call, that we might together "look to what unites us" and strive to "cooperate in a productive way in the areas of culture and society, and for the promotion of justice and peace ... throughout the world".⁹

***Pope Benedict
has declared
that
interreligious
and
intercultural
dialogue
between
Christians
and Muslims
... is a vital
necessity'***

3 cont.

The Call to Christian Muslim Dialogue continued...

7. In Adelaide, Archbishop Philip Wilson calls upon Catholics to play their part in this work of promoting Christian-Muslim dialogue through the 'Building Bridges' program. To that end, the Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission has established a Standing Committee to facilitate this movement.
8. Guided by these principles at the universal level, the Commission also takes note of the local South Australian context: for example, at the beginning, there was the historic Muslim contribution of the Afghan cameleers¹⁰; more recently there was the work of the South Australian Council of Churches-Muslim Women's Association group between 2001-2004, and other *ad hoc* initiatives of church and community groups. Following these works, the Commission now offers information, resources and a program of action to assist the work of further building 'bridges of friendship' with the Muslim community. All are invited to participate with great hope, relying on God Who is 'active in the hearts of human beings'.¹¹
9. An important part of the Committee's role is to assist with finding ways of educating the Catholic community towards a greater understanding of Islam. While working to dissipate false ideas and to overcome prejudice as may be necessary, it is hoped to facilitate the development of relationships with the Muslim community based on a sharing of faith experience and the common spiritual journey. In this regard, it is recognised that of the four kinds of interfaith dialogue usually identified (dialogue of life, of deeds, of discourse and of religious experience), local efforts will usually be focussed on the dialogue of life and the dialogue of religious experience.
10. Aware of the many difficulties on this journey, we recall the words of Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, now Apostolic Nuncio to Egypt and Roman Catholic delegate to the League of Arab States: 'Christian-Muslim dialogue is not only my affair, not just my business. It is God's work.' Such a view can only be strengthened by 'meetings with God-filled persons ... who are striving to do God's Will generously and courageously'. We can expect the same in Adelaide, where Christians and Muslims together can realise that in this interfaith journey, 'God is ahead of us and leading us'.¹²

**'God is ahead
of us and
leading us'**

¹ *Nostra Aetate*, 1965, n. 3

² Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, 'Christian Muslim Dialogue – A Survey of Recent Developments', April 2000. Note, at that time Archbishop Fitzgerald was Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue (1986-2000. He was President of the PCID 2002-2006.)

³ *Nostra Aetate*, n. 3.

⁴ Fitzgerald, 'Christian Muslim Dialogue...'

⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, Meeting with Muslim representatives in Rome, 25 September 2006.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Open Letter to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI from 38 eminent Muslim scholars, in response to the Regensburg lecture (12 September 2006), late October 2006.

⁸ Letter from Islamic scholars to Pope Benedict XVI and Christian Leaders, *A Common Word between Us and You*, 13 October, 2007.

⁹ Pope Benedict's Letter of Response, issued by Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, 19 November, 2007.

¹⁰ These pioneer Muslims established the first mosque in Australia in Little Gilbert Street, Adelaide, 1903.

¹¹ Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald.

¹² The Coptophile Column, Report by Rev. Dr. John H. Watson, <http://www.wataninet.com/printer>, accessed 25/9/06.

*The dialogues of
LIFE,
DEEDS,
DISCOURSE
and
RELIGIOUS
EXPERIENCE*

MISSION STATEMENT

In accordance with the document, “Call to Christian-Muslim Dialogue”, the Catholic Church in Adelaide seeks to build ‘bridges of friendship’ with Muslims and to promote mutual respect and understanding between our two communities.

A PROGRAM OF ACTION

Building upon the many links and friendships already created in recent years through initiatives of groups and individuals (e.g. see the “Call” document, n.8), we wish to continue this process of bridge-building through a program aimed at fostering growth in three areas:

1. social interactions of friendship and mutual support;
2. mutual knowledge and understanding;
3. opportunities for shared contemplative prayer.

While some centrally or regionally organised events may be arranged and advertised through parishes, the program will be chiefly realised through a predominantly grassroots approach to building friendships. At different times and in mutually appropriate ways, this may include activities embracing the four kinds of dialogue:

the dialogue of life – where Christians and Muslims meet and interact at the level of everyday life;

the dialogue of deeds - where Christians and Muslims collaborate in responding to social concerns of our society;

the dialogue of discourse – where scholars, theologians and other experts seek to clarify ideas, dispel misunderstanding and prejudice, and seek new understandings;

the dialogue of religious experience – where Christians and Muslims may share their spirituality, their contemplative prayer experience.

The Program includes the following elements:

- 1 Information:** Background and context of the Church’s call to Christian-Muslim relations, principles of interfaith dialogue, basic information about Muslims in Australia, other resources .
- 2 Suggested opportunities for social engagement with Muslim families:**
For example, hospitality at the time of Ramadan, the annual month of prayer and fasting (values common to both our communities). Local Muslim families may be willing to invite Catholic families to share the breaking of fast meal in their homes. [See below for how to find resource persons available to speak in parishes and who may assist parishioners in how to go about this.]

4 cont.

A Program of Action continued...**3 Public gatherings or forums where expert speakers share perspectives:**

These events could include time for response, questions, discussion, refreshments and socializing.

4 Other prayerful, social and/or learning experiences could include the following types of activities:**i) Social, religious opportunities:**

For example, the Marian month of May – Mary is held in special reverence among both Catholic and Muslim communities; some form of noting other special Muslim religious celebrations as appropriate.

ii) Prayer opportunities:

- * make local shared contemplative prayer gatherings known to others who may be able to join in.
- * convene retreat/discussion events of the type hosted by the World Christian Meditation Community (Laurence Freeman OSB). Such a meeting might focus on the role of contemplative prayer in inter-faith relations.

iii) Educative, informative experiences and events:

E.g. Parish-based gatherings – or mosque-based if desired and appropriate - for showing the 35 minute DVD, *'The Imam and The Pastor'*.

This is the inspiring story from Nigeria of two sworn-enemies in a climate of violence who eventually worked together for peace – cf. *Bridges*, Newsletter of the Christian-Muslim Network, Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations, June 2007, p. 3.

NB: The DVD is available from Initiatives for Change, operating as Grosvenor Books at this email address: grosvenor.books.@au.iofc.org

It is also available from the Catholic Resource & Information Service at 112 Kintore Street, Thebarton, telephone: 08 8301 6869.

Invite a local Imam as well as the local priest or minister, and follow with discussion.

iv) Identify other opportunities locally, and reach out to involve local Muslims.

To find out the names of some resource persons who may be available to speak in your parish or to advise on process, contact:

Cathy Whewell, Chancellor of the Archdiocese, Parkside-Glen Osmond parishioner, on telephone: 08 8210 8278.

Building Bridges

5

MUSLIMS AND ISLAM IN AUSTRALIA AND SOUTH AUSTRALIA

5.1 Muslims in Australia – a snapshot

<p>Muslims in Australia Muslims in Australia are ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse. More than 36 per cent of the 281,590 Muslims in Australia were born in Australia.</p> <p>Muslims have come to Australia from more than 120 countries. Major birthplaces are:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>BIRTHPLACE</th> <th>%</th> <th>BIRTHPLACE</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Australia</td> <td>36.4</td> <td>Pakistan</td> <td>3.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lebanon</td> <td>10.4</td> <td>Indonesia</td> <td>2.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Turkey</td> <td>8.3</td> <td>Iraq</td> <td>2.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Afghanistan</td> <td>3.5</td> <td>Bangladesh</td> <td>2.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bosnia-Herzegovina</td> <td>3.5</td> <td>Iran</td> <td>2.3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><small>Source: 2001 Census</small></p>	BIRTHPLACE	%	BIRTHPLACE	%	Australia	36.4	Pakistan	3.3	Lebanon	10.4	Indonesia	2.9	Turkey	8.3	Iraq	2.8	Afghanistan	3.5	Bangladesh	2.7	Bosnia-Herzegovina	3.5	Iran	2.3	<p>Geographic distribution The 2001 Census shows New South Wales (50.1 per cent of Australian Muslims) has the largest Muslim population, followed by Victoria (33.0 per cent). Western Australia has the third highest population of Australian Muslims, at 6.9 per cent.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>STATE/TERRITORY OF RESIDENCE</th> <th>MUSLIM POPULATION</th> <th>% OF STATE /TERRITORY POPULATION</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>New South Wales</td> <td>140,100</td> <td>2.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Victoria</td> <td>92,740</td> <td>2.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Western Australia</td> <td>19,460</td> <td>1.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Queensland</td> <td>14,990</td> <td>0.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>South Australia</td> <td>7,480</td> <td>0.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Australian Capital Territory</td> <td>3,490</td> <td>1.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Northern Territory</td> <td>950</td> <td>0.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tasmania</td> <td>870</td> <td>0.2%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><small>Source: 2001 Census</small></p>	STATE/TERRITORY OF RESIDENCE	MUSLIM POPULATION	% OF STATE /TERRITORY POPULATION	New South Wales	140,100	2.2%	Victoria	92,740	2.0%	Western Australia	19,460	1.1%	Queensland	14,990	0.4%	South Australia	7,480	0.5%	Australian Capital Territory	3,490	1.1%	Northern Territory	950	0.5%	Tasmania	870	0.2%
BIRTHPLACE	%	BIRTHPLACE	%																																																	
Australia	36.4	Pakistan	3.3																																																	
Lebanon	10.4	Indonesia	2.9																																																	
Turkey	8.3	Iraq	2.8																																																	
Afghanistan	3.5	Bangladesh	2.7																																																	
Bosnia-Herzegovina	3.5	Iran	2.3																																																	
STATE/TERRITORY OF RESIDENCE	MUSLIM POPULATION	% OF STATE /TERRITORY POPULATION																																																		
New South Wales	140,100	2.2%																																																		
Victoria	92,740	2.0%																																																		
Western Australia	19,460	1.1%																																																		
Queensland	14,990	0.4%																																																		
South Australia	7,480	0.5%																																																		
Australian Capital Territory	3,490	1.1%																																																		
Northern Territory	950	0.5%																																																		
Tasmania	870	0.2%																																																		
<p>Languages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over three-quarters of Muslims in Australia speak English only or have good English proficiency. 86.5 per cent of Australian Muslims speak a language other than English at home. Just over a third of Muslims in Australia speak Arabic (including Lebanese). Other than Arabic the next most commonly spoken languages are Turkish (16.3 per cent), English (11.3 per cent) and Persian (5.8 per cent). <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>LANGUAGE</th> <th>NUMBER</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Arabic (incl Lebanese)</td> <td>94,200</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Turkish</td> <td>45,930</td> </tr> <tr> <td>English</td> <td>31,690</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Persian</td> <td>16,330</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bosnian</td> <td>12,160</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Urdu</td> <td>11,910</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><small>Source: 2001 Census</small></p>	LANGUAGE	NUMBER	Arabic (incl Lebanese)	94,200	Turkish	45,930	English	31,690	Persian	16,330	Bosnian	12,160	Urdu	11,910	<p>Muslims in Australia – by age/gender The Muslim population in Australia is a relatively young group with almost half aged under 25 years (34.5 per cent for the total Australian population). This is largely due to the Australian-born Muslims, mostly second generation Australians, where 85.7 per cent are under 25 years.</p> <p>Overseas-born Muslims tend to be in the 25-44 year age group (47.5 per cent) which is consistent with their recent arrival in Australia.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>AGE GROUP</th> <th>MALES</th> <th>FEMALES</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>0-14 years</td> <td>44,640</td> <td>42,110</td> </tr> <tr> <td>15-24 years</td> <td>27,490</td> <td>25,200</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25-44 years</td> <td>49,490</td> <td>44,780</td> </tr> <tr> <td>45-64 years</td> <td>22,700</td> <td>17,440</td> </tr> <tr> <td>65+ years</td> <td>4,100</td> <td>3,590</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><small>Source: 2001 Census</small></p>	AGE GROUP	MALES	FEMALES	0-14 years	44,640	42,110	15-24 years	27,490	25,200	25-44 years	49,490	44,780	45-64 years	22,700	17,440	65+ years	4,100	3,590																			
LANGUAGE	NUMBER																																																			
Arabic (incl Lebanese)	94,200																																																			
Turkish	45,930																																																			
English	31,690																																																			
Persian	16,330																																																			
Bosnian	12,160																																																			
Urdu	11,910																																																			
AGE GROUP	MALES	FEMALES																																																		
0-14 years	44,640	42,110																																																		
15-24 years	27,490	25,200																																																		
25-44 years	49,490	44,780																																																		
45-64 years	22,700	17,440																																																		
65+ years	4,100	3,590																																																		
<p>Muslims by generation At the 2001 Census, the Muslim population in Australia was made up of 168,578 people who were born overseas, 91,682 second generation¹ Australians and 7,387 third or more generation² Australians.</p> <p><small>¹ Aust-born with one or both parents born o/s ² Aust-born with both parents born in Australia</small></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>BIRTHPLACE OF INDIVIDUAL/BIRTHPLACE OF PARENTS</th> <th>No.</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Born overseas (1st generation)</td> <td>168,578</td> <td>59.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Born in Australia and:</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>• One or both parents born overseas (2nd generation)</td> <td>91,682</td> <td>32.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Both parents born in Aust.</td> <td>7,387</td> <td>2.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Aust. Born/not stated or both not stated</td> <td>3,501</td> <td>1.2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Born in Australia</td> <td>102,570</td> <td>36.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not stated</td> <td>10,442</td> <td>3.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Muslims in Aust.</td> <td>281,590</td> <td>100</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	BIRTHPLACE OF INDIVIDUAL/BIRTHPLACE OF PARENTS	No.	%	Born overseas (1 st generation)	168,578	59.9	Born in Australia and:			• One or both parents born overseas (2 nd generation)	91,682	32.6	• Both parents born in Aust.	7,387	2.6	• Aust. Born/not stated or both not stated	3,501	1.2	Total Born in Australia	102,570	36.4	Not stated	10,442	3.7	Total Muslims in Aust.	281,590	100	<p>Events and Festivals Muslim events and festivals are based on the Islamic lunar calendar and specific dates can therefore change from year to year. Main events are:</p> <p><i>Dhu Al-Hijja</i>: The month of pilgrimage (the <i>Hajj</i>) to Mecca. (December/January)</p> <p><i>Eid-ul-Adha</i>: The Festival of Sacrifice that occurs at the end of the <i>Hajj</i> and commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son for God. (December/January)</p> <p><i>Muharram/Al-Hijra</i>: The Islamic New Year. (December/January)</p> <p><i>Eid Milad al-Nabi</i>: The birthday of the Prophet. (April)</p> <p><i>Ramadan</i>: Muslims must begin fasting between sunrise and sunset. (September)</p> <p><i>Eid-ul-Fitr</i>: The end of Ramadan. (October)</p> <p><small>Source: DIMA 2006 Diary of Australia and Media Guide: Islam & Muslims in Australia 2006</small></p>																								
BIRTHPLACE OF INDIVIDUAL/BIRTHPLACE OF PARENTS	No.	%																																																		
Born overseas (1 st generation)	168,578	59.9																																																		
Born in Australia and:																																																				
• One or both parents born overseas (2 nd generation)	91,682	32.6																																																		
• Both parents born in Aust.	7,387	2.6																																																		
• Aust. Born/not stated or both not stated	3,501	1.2																																																		
Total Born in Australia	102,570	36.4																																																		
Not stated	10,442	3.7																																																		
Total Muslims in Aust.	281,590	100																																																		
<p>Relevant websites and further sources of information</p> <p>Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs – Australia www.immi.gov.au www.citizenship.gov.au www.harmony.gov.au</p>	<p>Australian Bureau of Statistics www.abs.gov.au</p> <p>Australian, state, territory and local governments www.gov.au</p> <p>Australian Government Information www.australia.gov.au</p>																																																			

5.2 IMAMS AND MOSQUES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Brother Khalid
Adelaide Masjid
20 Little Gilbert Street
Adelaide SA 5000
Telephone: 8231 6443

Brother Abdul Hadi
Gilles Plains Masjid
52-56 Wandana Avenue
Gilles Plains SA 5086

Imam Adnan (*Turkish*)
Renmark Islamic Society
Renmark SA 5341

Imam Amin (*Egyptian*)
Sheikh Solaiman (*Lebanese*)
Al-Khalil Masjid
Cnr Torrens Road & Audley Street
Woodville North SA 5012
Telephone: (08) 8268 1944, 8268 3735
Facsimile: (08) 8268 1253
Email: alkhalil-Masjid@com.au

Imam Sharif (*Tunisian*)
Parkholme Masjid
658 Marion Road
Parkholme SA 5043
Telephone: (08) 8277 8725



The Annunciation (detail) by Philippe de Champaigne

5.3 ESSENTIAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES:

'A BACKGROUND BRIEF ON MUSLIMS IN AUSTRALIA'

See separate article in accompanying folder

5.4 ISLAM AND MARY (MARYAM)

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is held in great esteem and respect in Islam.

Sura 19 of the Holy Qur'an is entitled MARYAM and contains the "story of Mary" (verses 17ff.), which is an account of the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary:

***I am only a messenger from thy Lord,
To announce to thee the gift of a holy son. (v.19)***

Mary was seen by the Prophet Muhammad to be the very greatest, the most marvellous of all women. She is considered, both in the Qur'an and in later theological commentaries on it, to have reached the very summit of "servanthood" (*ubuda*), and to be the greatest possible example to any believer of the transforming and life-giving power of pure selfless adoration of the Divine.

There is a story which says that when the Prophet reentered Mecca and started to cleanse the Kaaba of the images and frescoes that "sullied" it, he left on the wall the fresco of the Virgin and her child.

In one of the most luminous and enigmatic of *ahadith* (sayings of Muhammad), the Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "Paradise is at the feet of the Mother."

The Virgin Mary, blessed mother of Jesus, may peace be upon them both, is described in the Glorious Qur'an, and therefore in all Islamic teaching, as the most sanctified of women. In the following verses, the Holy Qur'an proclaims her as the paragon of virtue and purity, surpassed by none before her as the supreme expression of womanhood.

Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak al-Jerrahi,
Blessed Virgin Mary, p.1.

Behold the angel said:

***"O Mary, Allah has chosen you and purified you.
He has chosen you above the women of all peoples.
O Mary, be devoted to your Lord. (Q.3: 42-43)***

***Mary, Imran's daughter, guarded her virginity,
so We breathed Our Holy Spirit into her
and she fulfilled in her person the words of her Lord and His Revelations,
and was one of the devout servants. (Q.66:12)***

6

RESOURCES FOR APPROACHING INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

6.1 PRAYER – INDISPENSABLE FOUNDATION OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Your efforts will not bear fruit unless they are rooted in contemplation, allowing us to see the working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individuals as also in the customs, rites and traditions that shape their lives. May we be open to the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of reconciliation and renewal, so that we may be truly instruments of the Peace of Christ.

From acceptance speech of Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, Apostolic Nuncio to Egypt and Vatican delegate to the League of Arab States, recently honoured with the Pax Christi Award (St. John's University) for distinguished work in Christian-Muslim relations, 13 May, 2007.

On convergence of the mystical faith experience

The three monotheistic religions [Judaism, Christianity, Islam]... unequivocally claim to have their roots in the God of Abraham. They share the same God [although the concept of God is not identical in the three monotheistic religions].

... [However] it is at the level of faith as lived by the mystics that the three monotheistic religions can be said to converge truly. The mystics of all three religions are bent, with an unquenchable thirst, on a quest for union with the same one God, at once transcendent and immanent, the author of life who graciously communicates [Godself] to unworthy creatures. Whether in the Kabbala tradition or in the Christian tradition or in Muslim Sufism, the mystics of the three monotheistic religions witness to the same values of communion and manifest a similar relentless search for union with the one God toward whom the whole of humankind is tending. ...

Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2001), 260-262.

'Through our respective commitment to contemplative prayer we eventually meet in the Truth.'

... It has become clear to me that interreligious dialogue cannot make real progress unless it is combined with shared prayer. On its own such dialogue is likely to end up as merely words, concepts and gesture. Real dialogue must make arrangements to allow those involved to feel able to articulate her/his deepest conviction about God, life, the world, evil. I am convinced by my own experiences that at the heart of this dialogue must be prayer.

... Christians and Muslims believe in one, all powerful, all merciful God – a God revealed to us through our respective sacred writings, those teachings which “reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all [people]” (*Nostra Aetate* 2), a God open to us in prayer, prayer encouraged throughout the day and night. We can affirm the validity of each other's prayer, we can

6.1 cont.

PRAYER – INDISPENSABLE FOUNDATION OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE Cont.

encourage each other in the primary duty of prayer by “being together” in spirit if not in body, while each is at prayer. In and through that prayer there is growth in mutual understanding of the truth and affirmation through love of personal worth of each other. ...

... Shared contemplative silence, precisely because it is faith shared in silence, crosses boundaries created by words. Rays of truth shine more brightly when not confined by the routeways of language and worship. In that silence each person is “emptied” of self and opened for God. It is precisely through this experience that we come to greater understanding of the spirituality of other religions.

It is emphatically not a path to a new religion, a new revelation. Contemplation in silence can only be undertaken within the tradition of one’s own faith. Any encouragement will bolster that faith, by illustrating the wonderful majesty and mercy of God. ...

... Being still, in that silence we are in the presence of the creating God, all powerful, all merciful. In this silence we will be following the example of Pope Benedict in the Blue Mosque in Istanbul.

Abbot Timothy Wright, Benedictine monk, Ampleforth Abbey, in *The Tablet*, 10 February, 2007, 13.

Meditation or contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition**1 The necessity and fruits of meditation or contemplation**

In both Western and Eastern traditions, meditation (or contemplation) is acknowledged as an essential work, an ongoing discipline of the pilgrimage of spiritual growth. ... Prayer is the deepest, the primal therapy of the suffering human condition. Therefore meditation (‘pure prayer’) is not an elite practice for the spiritually advanced. It is the natural way to grow. ... It is a universal practice although each individual, like each spiritual tradition, appropriates it in his or her own way. ... Its fruits are agreed by all traditions Compassion and wisdom, generosity and tolerance, forgiveness and kindness, gentleness and peace, joy and creativity. In other words, happiness and simple, basic human goodness. By liberating these potential qualities, meditation advances the cause of human wholeness.

Laurence Freeman, *Jesus the Teacher Within* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 197-198.

2 The practice of meditation

....prayer is not a matter of talking to God, but of listening to God, or being with God. ...

For more on the practice of meditation, see John Main, *Word into Silence* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1980), 10-11.

6.1 cont.

PRAYER – INDISPENSABLE FOUNDATION
OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE Cont.**Mystical prayer in the Islamic tradition**

The branches of mysticism in Islam are called collectively Sufism, from the Arabic *tasawwuf*, thought to come from the robes of wool, *suf*, worn by some early Muslim mystics. Sufism is not a sect as such, as Sufis remain part of the larger group, whether Sunni or Shi'a. Islamic mysticism developed fairly early in the history of Islam, and, while some Muslims reject outright its validity as a spiritual path, others believe that the tradition of silent contemplation has its model in the example of the Prophet, who often withdrew for solitary prayer. Sufism is concerned with finding Islam's inner meaning, that is, going beyond the primary and obvious meaning of the Qur'an and the *hadith* to the meaning that is hidden. The Sufi's purposes in this is to submit him/herself more perfectly to God's will.

Wafia Omar and Kirsty Allen, *The Muslims in Australia* (Canberra: Aust. Government Publishing Service, 1996), 4-5.

Centrality of prayer in Islam

[Islamic prayer involves] prayer in all its modes, from individual supplication, to the canonical prayers, to the invocation of the Names of God (*al-dhikr*), which is quintessential prayer, practised especially by the Sufis and identified at the highest level with the prayer of the heart....

Sufism is like the heart of the body of Islam, invisible from the outside but providing nourishment for the whole organism.

It is the inner spirit that breathes in the outward forms of the religion and makes possible the passage from the outer world to the inward paradise – a paradise we carry in our heart at the centre of our being but remain, for the most part, unaware of because of the hardening of the heart associated by Islam with the sin of forgetfulness. ...

[From Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam - Religion, History and Civilization* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 28, 81.]

6.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

Both the World Council of Churches and the Vatican as the largest and most influential Christian bodies in the world are the sources from which I am drawing to talk about interfaith dialogue.

Over the past thirty years great efforts have been made towards a new understanding between Christians and Muslims. This is true of the other world religions, but we are limiting ourselves to Islam and Christianity.

Christian-Muslim relations have been historically marked by confrontation. Some would claim that the change has occurred only since Christians in the West particularly, have been able and willing to rethink their relations with Islam and the Muslim world. The development of ecumenism, the critical re-examination of Christian mission and the awareness of our becoming increasingly pluralist societies, account for a new call to dialogue.

In the complex history of Christian-Muslim relations there was much rivalry and war. It is often forgotten that there were rich and fertile encounters in the realms of life and ideas. But our historical memories have led to the conflicts overshadowing the peaceful experiences and drowning out the voices of understanding. It is the same thing as the perceptions of difference overshadowing our common or shared principles.

In the global context, the process of national liberation and de-colonization has tended to favour a more equitable relationship between Christians and Muslims, creating better conditions for meaningful interreligious and intercultural dialogue. In conjunction with these developments, religious world views interacted with universalist and humanist ideas, demonstrating a greater sensitivity to the spreading reality of religious plurality.

Christians have to address this reality, defining its significance for their own self-understanding. Optimistic in character, this response gave birth to ideas that, during the sixties and seventies led to authoritative church texts and various types of guidelines on dialogue. Similarly, many Muslims upheld the idea of dialogue and participated actively in various initiatives. They emphasized the qur'anic call to dialogue and, in some cases, suggested that Muslims need to be leading partners in responding to this call.

Dialogue was faced with both resistance and hesitation — largely because of fear of domination of one partner over the other.

There were 5 objections which are worth noting:

1. The local context of communal relations in a given society makes broader dialogue irrelevant.
2. Dialogue may function as a cover for unequal power relations or as an ornament concealing purposes different from those stated.
3. People are weary of controversy and tend to be apprehensive of any mutual inquiry and questioning.
4. Some see dialogue as compromising the truth and a betrayal of the divine call to mission or da'wa.
5. Some argue that dialogue is a more sophisticated form of mission, or even if that is not the intention of its initiators, leading to mission.

Source: Columban Centre for Christian Muslim Relations, Sydney

6.3

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE HOW CAN WE GO ABOUT IT?

Pope Paul VI considered dialogue a precious vehicle for understanding and renewal. In challenging the Church to become a Church of dialogue Pope Paul VI wrote: "Dialogue is an example of the art of spiritual communication."

In 1964 he established the Secretariat for Non-Christians. When John Paul II raised the status of this secretariat he named it *The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue*.

So, dialogue is a very important word in relations between the major religions of the world.

Dialogue does not just deal with words. In addition to using words, we 'speak' by our gestures, by our actions, and by inaction.

Cardinal Francis Arinze, former President of the Pontifical Commission for Interreligious Dialogue, often chooses to describe it as occurring at four levels. These four levels have been given various titles, but in essence remain the same.

Dialogue of Life
Dialogue of Action
Dialogue of Discourse
Dialogue of Religious Experience

So, how do we go about interfaith dialogue?

Before analysing these levels, there are certain approaches that are endemic to good dialogue.

Let's make sure that we can be understood — check out the stance and comprehension of the other/s.

In the spirit of the Beatitudes, let's be respectful and patient, endeavouring to maintain our own personal peace and also interpersonal peace.

Let's develop friendships across the barriers, and trust the integrity of the other.

Let's be sensitive and prudent in what we do and say.

Let's own and rejoice in our own religion and the faith it proclaims.

Really, it all boils down to mature, adult respect and concern for each other.

6.4

GUIDELINES FOR INTERFAITH DIALOGUE**Preamble**

'The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well'. *(Gaudium et spes, n.1)*

In the third millennium interreligious dialogue has a crucial contribution to make as people of different religions meet in an atmosphere of freedom and openness in order to listen to the other, to grow in understanding and to seek opportunities to create greater peace and harmony in the world through the joint promotion of moral values, development and justice.

Dialogue requires both listening and active communication. It can take many forms:

- a) The ***dialogue of everyday life***, where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations.
- b) The ***dialogue of action***, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people.
- c) The ***dialogue of theological exchange***, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other's spiritual values.
- d) The ***dialogue of religious experience***, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute. *(Dialogue and Proclamation, 42)*

Interreligious dialogue can help us grow in our own faith if we remain open to the action of God which comes through our dialogue partner. Religions themselves can benefit as they are enriched and purified by their encounter with the beliefs, practices and values of other faiths. Dialogue can also be a means of building up and strengthening social harmony. It lessens the possibility that religion will become a factor which aggravates already existing political, social or other divisions and tensions.

Interreligious dialogue and proclamation of one's own faith are to be recognised as distinct though related activities with different goals. It is the right of every religious believer to propose his or her religion to others with the hope that they may welcome it, believe in it and embrace it. Dialogue, on the other hand, aims at meeting a believer of another religious conviction in order to listen, to understand, to be enriched and to cooperate for the good of society. Neither one must be used as a means to the other.

When there is mutual freedom to share one's religion dialogue is helped, not impeded, by proclamation. The essential and underlying relationship

6.4 Cont. **GUIDELINES FOR INTERFAITH DIALOGUE Cont.**

between dialogue and proclamation is the need to respect the truth under God who is the fountain of all truth. There is no place in either dialogue or in proclamation for proselytism, which involves the use of pressure - physical, psychological, political, economic, social or otherwise - to bring about conversion.

'The church, therefore, urges its sons and daughters to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, together with their social life and culture'.

(Nostra Aetate, n. 2)

FOUR PRINCIPLES OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

1. ***Dialogue begins when people meet people.***
In dialogue we nurture relations and this takes patience and perseverance.
2. ***Dialogue depends on mutual understanding and mutual trust.***
In dialogue we need to reach the point where we can be honest with each other.
3. ***Dialogue makes it possible to share in service to the community.***
Dialogue which leads to action is likely to be sustained, either as a group together, or by inspiring individuals within the group.
4. ***Dialogue becomes a means of authentic witness.***
Sharing good news happens naturally within the context of dialogue. We are all called to witness to the faith that is within us. This principle is vital because it removes the false dichotomy between dialogue and proclamation of the Gospel. As Christians we are called to witness to the faith of Christ, and Christ crucified and risen. There need be no compromise here. If there is, then principle 2 has not been fulfilled.

6.5

TEN RULES FOR INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

- 1 **Have a good grasp of your own tradition** - When engaging in dialogue a person needs to bring with them a deeply lived experience of their own tradition to be able to share its fruits with others.
- 2 **Come to dialogue in order to learn and grow, not to change the other** - Each person who enters into dialogue needs to come with an openness to learn and to change in their own attitudes and perceptions, not out of a desire to change the other. In this way, all those who participate will be changed in some way as a result of the dialogue.
- 3 **Be willing also to help your own faith community to grow and change** - Since dialogue is a corporate activity, it is necessary that each person enters into dialogue not only across faith lines but also with other members of their own faith community, to share with them the fruits of interfaith dialogue. In this way, the whole community can eventually learn and change, gaining ever more perceptive insight into reality.
- 4 **Be honest and sincere and assume that others are equally honest and sincere** - Real dialogue is built on mutuality and trust.
- 5 **Respect the religious experience and identity of others and anticipate that they will do the same for you.** - Each dialogue partner can best define what it means for them to be an authentic member of their own tradition. This does not preclude a person changing, deepening, expanding and modifying their self-definition and understanding as a result of dialogue. Conversely, the one interpreted should be able to recognise themselves in the interpretation of others.
- 6 **Don't assume in advance where points of agreement or disagreement will exist** - Listen with empathy and sympathy and avoid presumptions about what the other will say. See how much is held in common while maintaining the integrity of your own tradition. If there is a real point of disagreement, it needs to be respected. However, it may be at a different point than that which was originally expected.
- 7 **Be prepared to participate in dialogue on an equal footing** - Each partner needs to come prepared to learn from the other and to share their own understanding on an equal basis. There is no such thing as one-way dialogue.
- 8 **Be self-reflective and prepared to critique your own tradition** - In dialogue, a person needs to combine healthy self-criticism with an ability to hold to one's religious tradition with integrity and conviction. A lack of such self-criticism implies that one's own tradition already has all the correct answers and that one has nothing to learn. Such an attitude makes dialogue not only unnecessary but almost impossible.
- 9 **Strive to experience the other's faith 'from within' and be prepared to view yourself differently as a result of an 'outside' perspective** - A religion is not merely something of the head, but also of the spirit, heart and 'whole being', individual and communal. John Dunne speaks of 'passing over' into another's religious experience and then coming back enlightened, broadened and deepened.
- 10 **Try to be aware of the cultural conditioning and historical memory we bring to dialogue** - In western culture, for example, we need to take account of the fact that we are heirs to the values of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Some participants in dialogue may come with painful memories of past injustices. It is important to be aware of how historical memory and cultural influences may impact on our dialogue.

Resources:

L. Swidler, 'The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious Dialogue', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, (20:1, Winter 1983.)

P. Cunningham and A. Starr (eds.), *'Sharing Shalom' — a process for interfaith dialogue between Christians and Jews*. (NY: Paulist Press, 1998.)

A. Wingate, 'Mission as dialogue — a contextual study from Leicester, UK'. (Unpublished article.)

Peace and Justice Option — Dominican Education conference, N.S. W, 1-4 October 2006

6.6

SOCIAL ASPECTS

*of being with Muslim brothers and sisters
that may differ from what we are used to*

Australia's Muslims come from over 70 different cultural groups so customs and traditions surrounding their ethnic backgrounds will vary. You may find some of the following information useful but you may also find that some of it does not apply to all Australian Muslims.

Friday is the holy day for Muslims:

Muslims attend the mosque (around mid-day) for the Friday Khutba, sermon, and prayers.

Celebrations:

There are only two special occasions:

'Id al-Fitr (the feast at the end of Ramadan — the month of fasting).

'Id al-Adha (the feast which commemorates the end of the pilgrimage season, the greatest feast of the Islamic year).

Visiting a Muslim home:

Hospitality is a strong Muslim custom and they will often like to offer a drink or meal if you visit.

Some Muslims like you to remove your shoes before entering the house (others may not) just ask your host before entering and they will let you know.

Sometimes there may be separate rooms for the males and females in a social gathering (again depending on the cultural background of the Muslim).

Greetings:

Greeting those of the opposite sex is usually only verbal (but take your cues from those around you). Offence should not be taken if a proffered hand is refused.

It is customary for people of the same sex to greet each other warmly.

Alcohol and Food:

Alcohol and pork are prohibited to Muslims – to be on the safe side please do not serve anything containing either.

When inviting Muslims for a meal, seafood or vegetarian is fine. (Meat needs to be Halal/Kosher – this is often not readily available).

7

OTHER RESOURCES

7.1 A CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAM

Rev Dr Keith Rowe

I value the opportunity to share my thoughts on a Christian understanding of Islam.

“CROSSING OVER.”

I received the request that I speak on this important topic as an invitation to “cross over” from the safety of the Christian world that I know so well and to enter the world of Islam, there to be challenged, questioned and to receive new wisdom or at least to gain new insights into wisdom I have received from within the Christian perspective on life. The process of “crossing over” has become an important understanding of inter-faith dialogue when taken seriously and with a desire to deepen our understanding of life and of God. To “cross over” means to leave the safety of what one has received and takes for granted and to enter, as far as one can, into the perspectives, experience and wisdom of another person or group. We try to “feel” the other’s way, as far as we can, from within rather than observing it in the manner of a dispassionate scholar. The process of “crossing over” is not completed till we have returned to our own home again, carrying with us new questions, new perspectives, and fresh interpretations of truth we had thought we knew already. Crossing over is a gentle, imaginative and deeply spiritual activity. Whether we are passing over from one culture to another or from one religion to another, it is a way of knowing that is a doorway into a world shaped by peace, understanding and shared commitment to the well being of the human family. The goal of “crossing over” is not to judge but to understand, not to argue but to receive, not to conquer but to appreciate. It does not require that we agree with everything we learn from our neighbour but it does require that we listen, try to understand, try to “feel” their way of living and believing and are ready to be questioned by what we find.

In “crossing over” into Islam in search of understanding I am not entering alien territory. Islam and Christianity are two significant responses to the call of God to share in the healing of the world. They are both invitations to cooperate with God in the creation of a world community marked by peace, justice, generosity and hospitality. Dialogue between our two faiths is a conversation between first cousins who sadly have been separated by history, culture, geography and political expediency. We stand together, in a post 9/11 world, like family members seeking reconciliation and understanding sufficient to enable us to share together in God’s healing of a needy world. Not everyone would agree with this understanding. There are many Christians and Muslims who are happy to perpetuate and even deepen inherited antagonisms. I simply believe they are wrong and act contrary to the purposes of God.

*These are the first two paragraphs of Rev Dr Keith Rowe’s address to the
PEACE AND HARMONY INTERFAITH CONFERENCE
held in Auburn, Australia, 8-10 June 2007.*

*The remainder of his talk can be accessed at
http://www.flinders.edu.au/oasis/chaplains/geoff_papers/Crossing_Over.pdf*

7.2

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

A Common Word between Us and You

(Summary and Abridgement of a letter from Muslim scholars to Pope Benedict XVI and other Christian Leaders, 2007)

Muslims and Christians together make up well over half of the world's population. Without peace and justice between these two religious communities, there can be no meaningful peace in the world. The future of the world depends on peace between Muslims and Christians.

The basis for this peace and understanding already exists. It is part of the very foundational principles of both faiths: love of the One God, and love of the neighbour. These principles are found over and over again in the sacred texts of Islam and Christianity. The Unity of God, the necessity of love for Him, and the necessity of love of the neighbour is thus the common ground between Islam and Christianity.

The following are only a few examples:

Of God's Unity, God says in the Holy Qur'an: *Say: He is God, the One! / God, the Self-Sufficient Besought of all! (Al-Ikhlās, 112:1-2)*. Of the necessity of love for God, God says in the Holy Qur'an: *So invoke the Name of thy Lord and devote thyself to Him with a complete devotion (Al-Muzzammil, 73:8)*.

Of the necessity of love for the neighbour, the Prophet Muhammad said: *"None of you has faith until you love for your neighbour what you love for yourself."*

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ said: *"Hear, O Israel, 'the Lord our God, the Lord is One / And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. / And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*

(Mark 12:29-31)

In the Holy Qur'an, God Most High enjoins Muslims to issue the following call to Christians (and Jews—the *People of the Scripture*):

Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to a common word between us and you: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him). (Aal 'Imran 3:64)

The words: *we shall ascribe no partner unto Him* relate to the Unity of God, and the words: *worship none but God*, relate to being totally devoted to God. Hence they all relate to the *First and Greatest Commandment*. According to one of the oldest and most authoritative commentaries on the Holy Qur'an the words: *that none of us shall take others for lords beside God*, mean 'that none of us should obey the other in disobedience to what God has commanded'. This relates to the Second Commandment because justice and freedom of religion are a crucial part of love of the neighbour.

Thus in obedience to the Holy Qur'an, we as Muslims invite Christians to come together with us on the basis of what is common to us, which is also what is most essential to our faith and practice: the *Two Commandments* of love.

For the full article go to: <http://www.acommonword.com>

7.3

SOME FURTHER RESOURCES**Books:**

Armstrong, Karen. *Islam A Short History*. London: Phoenix Press, 2000

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Islam Religion, History and Civilisation*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003

Saeed, Abdullah. *Islam in Australia*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2003

Evans, Janine. *2 Veil Or Not 2 Veil. The life of an Aussie Muslim*, www.2veil.com. 2007

Articles and Papers:

Dr Keith Rowe. *A Christian Understanding of Islam*. His address to the Peace and Harmony Interfaith Conference, Auburn, Australia. 8-10 June 2007
http://www.flinders.edu.au/oasis/chaplains/geoff_papers/Crossing_Over.pdf

'*A Common Word Between Us and You*' From the official website of the Muslim Scholars' letter to Pope Benedict XVI and other Christian Leaders. <http://www.acommonword.com>
© 2007 C.E., 1428 A.H., *The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, Jordan*.



Bishop Greg O'Kelly and Sheikh Solaiman Nouredine at the Al Khalil Mosque November 2007
Picture: Ben Macmahon

Cover Picture: (from left), Dr Carl Vedivella Belle, Deputy President of the Hindu Society of South Australia, Sheikh Solaiman Nouredine from the Islamic Arabic Centre and Al Khalil Mosque, Most Venerable Thich Nhu Hue, president of the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation in SA, Emeritus Archbishop Leonard Faulkner, Venerable Thich Vien Tri from the Abbot Phap Hoa Vietnamese Buddhist Temple, Venerable John Collas, Archdeacon of Anglican Archdiocese of Adelaide, Rabbi David Kopstein of the Jewish Adelaide Progressive Congregation, Adelaide Archbishop Philip Wilson and Bishop of Denpasar Benyamin Bria. Picture taken on the occasion of the Bali Bombing Memorial Service from the Southern Cross Newspaper November 2005. Used by permission.