

WALKING POINTS

FURTHER STUDY AND ACTION PROPOSALS IN CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

LISTENING: FROM IGNORANCE TO UNDERSTANDING

1. Learn through more study and discussion. “Windows for Understanding: Jewish-Muslim-Lutheran Relations,” an online resource from the ELCA at www.elca.org/ecumenical/interreligious, is a resource designed with you in mind and includes a glossary of terms used in “Talking Points.”
2. Another fruitful path for study and discussion is the open letter sent by Muslim scholars and religious leaders to Christian leaders throughout the world on Oct. 13, 2007, focusing on the commandments to love God and neighbors as common ground for dialogue among Christians and Muslims. Those addressed in this letter included ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson. The letter and responses since its release can be accessed at www.acommonword.com.
3. Organize a movie or a book discussion night. One good film is “Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet” (2002, aired on PBS). Interesting novels include Mohja Kahf, *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, or Camilla Gibb, *Sweetness in the Belly*. Or pick up a work of non-fiction such as Greg Mortenson, *Three Cups of Tea*. Discuss how the film or book challenged or confirmed your understanding of Islam and Muslims.
4. Many other resources for study are available. Recommendations from members of the Consultative Panel include: Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam: An Introduction*; Amir Hussein, *Oil & Water: Two Faiths, One God*; Carl W. Ernst, *Following Muhammad*; Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur’an*; Ingrid Mattson, *The Story of the Qur’an*; Bruce Feiler, *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths*; Joan Chittister et al., *The Tent of Abraham*.

CARING: FROM HOSTILITY TO HOSPITALITY

Many Christians have Muslim friends at school, work or in the communities where they live. An effort to learn about each other's faith, with a sense of openness and curiosity, will result in amazing discoveries. We are all strangers to each other. Learning about each other's faith and background may lead to an appreciation of similarities and differences between Islam and Christianity, as well as a greater understanding and respect for other backgrounds and cultures. More importantly, however, it may lead to an appreciation of other people as fellow human beings who love God and want to honor God's will in their lives.

1. Set up exchange visits with a nearby mosque or Islamic Center. Eventually a smaller group of individuals might schedule informal dialogue meetings. You can begin with a few people from each religious tradition sharing their earliest memories of God. When there is sufficient trust and friendship, move on to such topics as how to know God's will and how to have confidence in an afterlife in the presence of God. Perhaps small groups of "faith clubs" might form out of such relationships.
2. Invite a Muslim to speak with your study group. Perhaps a mother who is Muslim might speak about the challenges she faces in raising children in America, or a coworker might speak about practicing faith in their workplace. Or someone who has immigrated as a refugee might tell about experiences in coming to America.
3. Review together the 1998 ELCA "Message on Immigration." Observe "World Refugee Day" together on June 20th. Learn about the work of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) and become involved in the discussion of our nation's policy (www.lirs.org). LIRS partners with churches, the federal government, and local resettlement agencies to resettle refugees. In addition, LIRS provides legal consultation assistance. LIRS is a strong advocate for enacting fair and generous immigration policies and for encouraging the U.S. to go beyond our borders to assist displaced individuals worldwide. LIRS partners with social service agencies to

provide assistance to asylum seekers and unaccompanied children. LIRS materials available for your study include: *Responding to The Call: A Manual for Congregations Reaching Out to Immigrants through Ministries of Service and Justice*; *Welcoming the Immigrant: Information and Resources for Lutheran Congregations*; and *A Faithful Response: a Study for Churches on Welcoming the Stranger*.

SERVING: FROM STRANGERS TO COMPANIONS

Listening to each other and caring for one another will lead to a commitment to support and defend one another in times of trouble. Working together for the common good as well as for justice and peace will be a natural byproduct of living out our faith in daily life. What is God calling you to do?

1. Does a forum for interfaith dialogue exist in your community? If not, encourage ecumenical Christian groups to find Muslim counterparts in your community and begin to study "A Common Word between Us and You" together. Together, consider questions of history, prayer and other practices of faith in your immediate context.
2. Hold a multicultural and interfaith event. See www.trifaith.org for examples of what you might do together.
3. Work together with a local resettlement agency to co-sponsor a refugee family or mentor new Americans (teach ESL, Citizenship, or employment readiness classes). Gather household items and other material donations to give to newly arrived refugees. Involve children in creating "welcome boxes" or "back-to-school backpacks" for newly arrived refugees.
4. Consider another mutual service project in your community. Perhaps you could build a Habitat for Humanity house together, or sponsor a clean-up effort in a local park.