

**THAT WE MAY KNOW EACH OTHER
STATEMENT ON UNITED CHURCH–MUSLIM RELATIONS TODAY**

Approved at the 39th General Council of the United Church of Canada, August 2006

Preamble

The United Church of Canada is called continually in all courts of the church to bear witness to Jesus Christ in the midst of our neighbours and in the world. In accordance with that call, the 38th General Council in 2003 approved for study across the church a proposed statement and study document, *That We May Know Each Other*, on the relationship of the United Church to Islam.

People of the United Church have responded thoughtfully and prayerfully to the study document and to the proposed policy statement. This statement encompasses that response and seeks to be a faithful expression of our understanding of United Church-Muslim relations.

We believe this statement is consistent with the theology and faith of The United Church of Canada and reflects our historic witness as a Christian community. As acknowledged in *That We May Know Each Other*, from Islam's very beginnings, Muslim–Christian relationships have presented profound theological and social challenges to Christians. Islam confronts us with the meaning of a later revelation and the question of differing interpretations of core faith stories.

We believe that the prediction of the Qur'an that Christians and Muslims can be the "nearest among them in love" (Surah 5:82) is possible and preferable to an alternative path of increasing tension, mistrust, and violence. We believe, furthermore, that the task of reconciliation between Muslims and Christians is at the heart of what the church needs to be about as we seek to be faithful participants in God's mission today.

We believe the church can continue to affirm its own distinctive self-identity while affirming that other faiths and traditions have their own self-understanding. The Bible teaches that the Word and Wisdom of God are not limited to Christians, and the Spirit of God is free and faithful. We therefore affirm and cherish the differences between traditions as gifts of God, which can be life-giving and transformative.

We believe that the church must continue to encourage its membership to grow in understanding Muslims as they would wish to be understood. At the same time we must search for new ways of theologically understanding Islam and its relationship with Christianity. Through creating such understanding it will be possible to sustain long-term mutual relationships of respect, trust, and common action for the sake of the world we all inhabit.

Therefore, as an act of witness to our desire to find new ways of understanding and working with Muslim neighbours for the sake of the well-being of our world, The United Church of Canada:

Affirms that Christianity and Islam are in essence religions of peace, mercy, justice, and compassion.

Acknowledges hostility and misunderstanding between Christians and Muslims and between Christianity and Islam.

Affirms a vision of Muslim and Christian relations no longer bound by past histories, and free from ignorance, indifference, and ill will.

That We May Know Each Other

Affirms that The United Church of Canada is committed to a journey towards reconciliation, understanding and cooperation with our Muslim neighbours.

Affirms that we share with Muslims a belief in one God and a common heritage through Abraham.

Affirms that God is creatively at work in the religious life of Muslims and Christians.

Acknowledges another common bond in that Jesus, as understood in Islam, is accorded special honour as a prophet in the Qur'an and by Muslims.

Acknowledges the prophetic witness of Muhammad, and that the mercy, compassion, and justice of God are expressed in the Qur'an, which is regarded by Muslims as the Word of God.

Affirms that God, whose love we have experienced in Jesus Christ as boundless and resourceful, works creatively and redemptively in us and in others.

Affirms that The United Church of Canada is committed to a vision which leads us to work with Muslims and others for peace and justice for all humanity.

Invites all people of The United Church of Canada to participate in conversation and study that upholds and respects the integrity and faithful witness of our traditions.

Encourages all people of The United Church of Canada to seek out opportunities to work together with Muslims to seek justice and resist evil for the sake of the world we all inhabit.