



INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

2000 Quotations

Compiled by Paul McKenna

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INTRODUCTION

This collection of 200 dialogue and dialogue-related quotations is gathered from a wide range of sources – ancient and modern.

You will find this anthology of quotations to be useful:

- ◇ for private and group reflection
- ◇ in writing articles, papers and blogs
- ◇ in preparing lectures, workshops, seminars and conferences
- ◇ as a permanent reference document.



Young people participate in an interfaith circle of conversation at World Youth Day 2002 in Toronto, Canada. Two hundred Muslim and Catholic youth gathered for an evening of dialogue. The event was co-sponsored by the Toronto Muslim community and Scarboro Missions.

DIVERSITY AND DIALOGUE

How to respond to the many challenges associated with diversity?
How to reap the various gifts and benefits of diversity? How do various approaches to dialogue enable us to address these challenges and partake of these gifts? How can we learn to live together – and thrive together – in difference? In the first quotation of this section, Sister Mary Boys, gives us a profound, concise and poetic starting-point.



Scarboro Missions

Dialogue is the art of conversation across boundaries of difference.

Sister (Dr.) Mary Boys, SNJM

In dialogue, we allow what is beautiful, peaceful and meaningful in the other to transform us.

Thich Nhat Hanh

Genuine interfaith dialogue requires that you overcome your fear of the unknown by learning to build trust in the goodness of the unknown instead of experiencing it as threat.

Dr. Helene Ijaz

God must like diversity because God sure has created a lot of it.

Source unknown

To listen to another is to take something of the other into ourselves, to risk being changed by what the other has to say to us.
Project Listening

Unity, not uniformity, must be our aim. We attain unity only through variety.
Mary Parker Follett

It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept and celebrate those differences.

Audre Lorde



globalsocialtheory.org. Public domain.

We not only need to understand one another, we need one another to understand ourselves.

Dr. Jean Halperin

The world in which you were born is just one model of reality. Other cultures are not failed attempts at being you; they are unique manifestations of the human spirit.

Dr. Wade Davis

Why is interfaith dialogue so difficult? [It is] the confusion between the particular and the universal. Every authentic spiritual path is an avenue to a shared universal. But that universal is far greater than any particular path.

Rabbi (Dr.) Ted Falcon

God is too big to fit into one religion.

Bumper sticker

What does it mean to listen to a voice before it is spoken? It means making space for the other, being aware of the other, paying attention to the other, honouring the other.

Dr. Parker J. Palmer

Intimacy requires a profound respect for difference.

Dr. Harriet Lerner

It seems to me that the world's religions are like siblings separated at birth. We've grown up in different neighbourhoods, different households, with different songs, stories, traditions and customs. But now, we've been reunited, and, having found each other after so many years apart, we look into each other's faces and we can see the family resemblance. We're back together again, and it's very good.

Richard Watts

All religions. All this singing. One song...

Rumi

The more the truth of my religion opens me to others, the more I can affirm it as absolute.

Dr. Paul Knitter

Religions are like languages

Featuring Rabbi Rami Shapiro

To me, religions are like languages: no language is true or false; all languages are of human origin; each language reflects and shapes the civilization that speaks it; there are things you can say in one language that you cannot say or say as well in another; and the more languages you speak, the more nuanced your understanding of life becomes. Judaism is my mother tongue, yet in matters of the spirit I strive to be multilingual. In the end, however, the deepest language is silence.



by Ellis408. Public domain.

If we take the world's enduring religions at their best, we discover the distilled wisdom of the human race.

Dr. Huston Smith

At their spiritual core, the world's great spiritual traditions offer...a technology of transcendence. The great religious traditions can be viewed...at their mystical core...as road maps and technologies for the induction of transcendent states of consciousness.

Dr. Roger Walsh

The call to compassion is broadly perceived as the message of the parable of the Good Samaritan in the Christian New Testament. But there is another key message in this story that is often overlooked. Jesus is asked, "Who is my neighbour?" His response can be interpreted as follows: "Your neighbour is that person who is different from you."

Paul McKenna

I have never met a person so ignorant that I could not learn something from him [or her].

Galileo Galilei

The surest liberation from idolatrous religion is to have to meet God in people who are very different from ourselves.

Peter Haynes

Perfect Masters are universal; they have come at all times, in different nations, cultures, religions, and social classes. Their teachings apply to everyone and do not depend on race, country, creed, time, caste, or religion. But when they die, we arrest their teachings into narrow compartments and forget their universal essence.

Miriam Bokser Caravella

[In dialogue,] differences are not to be removed but are to serve as mutual enrichment...Dialogue should thus be a dialectical engagement rather than a path to convergence. While some differences may be reconciled...the goal is not to create a hybrid of the future.

Dr. Paul Mojzes



© John Mathew Smith 2001. Public domain.

When we lose the right to be different, we lose the right to be free.

Nelson Mandela

Whatever their faith, the wise have always been able to meet each other beyond those boundaries of external forms and conventions which are natural and necessary to human life, but which nonetheless separate humanity.

Hazrat Inayat Khan

Everyone you will ever meet knows something that you don't know.

Bill Nye

I hold that it is the duty of every cultured man and woman to read sympathetically the scriptures of the world. If we are to respect others' religions as we would have them respect our own, a friendly study of the world's religions is a sacred duty... My respectful study of other religions has not abated my reverence for or my faith in the Hindu scriptures. They have indeed left their deep mark upon my understanding of the Hindu scriptures. They have broadened my view of life. They have enabled me to understand more clearly many an obscure passage in the Hindu scriptures.

Mohandas K. Gandhi

What's seen from here is different when seen from there.

Chaim Guri



Accept the truth from whatever source it comes.

Moses Maimonides

People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they have not communicated with each other.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



By Nobel Foundation. Public domain.

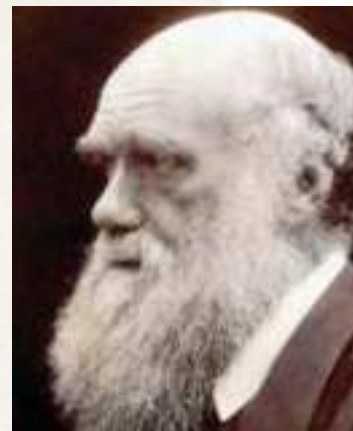
French-born, Cuban American author, Anais Nin (1903-1971) writes: "Each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until he or she arrives, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born." It seems that what Nin is saying here is that friendship has the capacity to awaken many potentialities and gifts within us as human beings. One thing that is common and vital to both friendship and interfaith dialogue is relationships. Accordingly, can we not say – inspired by Anais Nin – that "each religion represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until we encounter that religion, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born." Each religion we encounter has the capacity to awaken us to new potentialities within us, both as spiritual individuals and as spiritual traditions. And in the process, something "new" is born.

Paul McKenna

Evolution and diversity

Featuring Charles Darwin

There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning, endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved.



By Julia Margaret Cameron. Public domain.

Diversity is not the stumbling block to dialogue, but the prerequisite for it. Were we to determine that Christians and Buddhists are in actuality expressing the same things, it could only signify the end of dialogue. Only where there is difference, where there is tension, and where there is the possibility of confrontation and complementarity can there be born insight.

Thubten Losel

Remember: it is our differences that make all the difference.

Source unknown

I believe that although the religions of the world are apples and oranges and are more different than they are alike, still there is a quality of “fruitfulness” that characterizes them all and out of which a “common ground” for shared conversation can be established.

Dr. Paul Knitter

You don't have to be wrong for me to be right.

Rabbi Brad Hirschfield

What we search for is a way to undercut the dualism and to construct a new, holistic design for all reality built on an appreciation of difference in a genuine community. We seek a unifying vision that does not stratify what is distinct into superior-inferior layers but reconciles them in a relationship of mutuality.

Sister (Dr.) Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ

I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain.

James Baldwin

Real dialogue is where two or more people become willing to suspend their certainty in each other's presence.

Dr. David Bohm

We are talking only to ourselves. We are not talking to the rivers, we are not talking to the wind and the climate. Most of the disasters that are happening now are a consequence of that spiritual “autism.”

Rev. Dr. Thomas Berry



Race is a fiction

Featuring Toni Morrison

There is no such thing as race. None. There is just a human race – scientifically, anthropologically. Racism is a construct, a social construct and it has benefits. Money can be made off of it; people who don't like themselves can feel better because of it... so it has a social function, racism.

When we meet another person in inter-faith dialogue, we know for sure we are encountering someone who is clearly and unambiguously other than who we are. This encounter can produce either recognition or estrangement. In the happy event of mutual recognition and identification, the meeting in dialogue brings forth both the acceptance of the other and the recognition that this acceptance is integral to the recognition of the otherness within the self. Meeting “others,” beyond differences and comparisons, is the catalyst whereby we encounter our own hidden and unmanifest selves.

Dr. M. Darrol Bryant & Dr. Frank Flinn

Each person is a masterpiece. But an unfinished masterpiece. The good news is that authentic dialogue with “the other” enables us to go to finishing school. And this is how God completes the masterpiece.

Carole Hampton

In inter-religious dialogue, we must not compare our ideals with our dialogue partner's practice, but rather [compare] our ideals with our partner's ideals and our practice with our partner's practice.

Dr. Leonard Swidler

To attempt to understand the religious viewpoint of someone of another faith is one of the greatest challenges of the human mind and heart, as is the challenge to be understood by the other. It is not enough to understand an idea or a concept from another worldview, but we must glimpse how a multitude of ideas and concepts, symbols and stories, images and songs, festivals and rites, compose an entire world of meaning, and we must at least be able to imagine moving into that world and living in terms of it. We must be able to glimpse what truth looks like from that standpoint. Difficult as it may seem, it is also no less than what we ask of others in their understanding of ourselves.

Dr. Diane L. Eck

The influential Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) wrote the following: “The limits of my language are the limits of my world.” Can we extend this logic to suggest that “the limits of my interfaith experience are the limits of my experience of God?”

Paul McKenna

One astronaut's cosmic perspective on diversity

Featuring Pavel Vinogradov

Space flights change the perception of all people regardless of their nationality, their religion, the place from which they started – South Asia or America or Russia. They realize that there is nothing to divide, the Earth is small; you look at the atmosphere, which protects us, at this very narrow blue strip above the surface of the Earth and then you realize, “What are we doing?” We try to divide religion; this religion is good and that one is bad.



There are, of course, many religious “others” to know, and the vast majority of us have neither the opportunity nor sufficient knowledge to engage all the religious traditions. Yet knowing just one other religious tradition beyond one’s own offers a vast new horizon of understanding – not only on the tradition of the other, but on one’s own.

Sister (Dr.) Mary Boys, SNJM



Public domain.

No religion is an island.

Rabbi (Dr.) Abraham Joshua Heschel

Dialogue is the great equalizer.

Dr. Ester Shapiro Rok

As you welcome whatever you find alien within yourself, extend that same welcome to whatever you find alien in the outer world. I don’t know any virtue more important these days than hospitality to the stranger, to those we perceive as “other” than us.

Dr. Parker J. Palmer

Dialogue is born from an attitude of respect for the other person, from conviction that the other person has something good to say. It assumes that there is room in the heart for the person’s point of view, opinion and proposal. To dialogue entails a cordial reception, not a prior condemnation. In order to dialogue, it is necessary to know how to lower the defenses, open the doors of the house, and offer human warmth.

Pope Francis

Whenever we are celebrating what is different from ourselves, that’s when we know that we are actually doing interfaith.

Paul McKenna

The problem to be faced is: how to combine loyalty to one's own tradition with reverence for different traditions.

Rabbi (Dr.) Abraham Joshua Heschel

Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance.

Verna Myers

The Christian doctrine of the trinity needs the Islamic insistence on divine oneness; the impersonal Emptiness of Buddhism needs the Christian experience of the Divine Thou; the Christian teaching on the distinction between the ultimate and the finite needs the Hindu insight into the non-duality between Brahma and atman; the prophetic praxis-oriented content of the Judeo-Christian tradition needs the Eastern stress on personal contemplation and "acting without seeking the fruits of action." These contrasting affirmations can no more cancel one another than the day cancels the night or vice versa. That's why religions must witness to themselves in their diversities, so that they may assume their full meaning.

Dr. Paul Knitter



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**Be interfaithful
and multiply!**

Ruth Broyde Sharone

The most important thing in life is to speak with people you disagree with.

Rabbi Irwin Kula

If the structure does not permit dialogue, the structure must be changed.

Paulo Freire

Hearing each other's stories

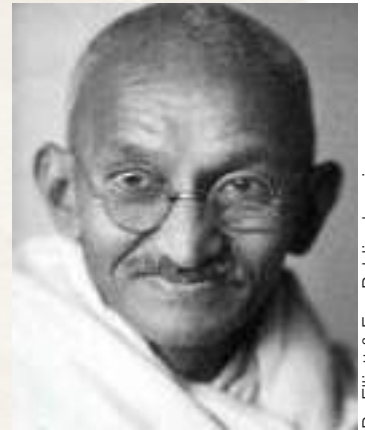
Featuring Neil Gaiman

We all have stories. Or perhaps, because we are, as humans, already an assemblage of stories. And the gulf that exists between us as people is that when we look at each other we might see faces, skin color, gender, race, or attitudes; but we don't see, we can't see, the stories. And once we hear each other's stories, we realize that the things we see dividing us are, all too often, illusions, falsehoods: that the walls between us are in truth no thicker than scenery.

Gandhi's "world village"

Featuring Dr. Diana L. Eck

[Mahatma] Gandhi was convinced that Truth, precisely because its claim upon us is ultimate, is many-sided and must be seen from many perspectives. There are many voices and legitimate perspectives in a complex household. There are many households in a village. There are many households of faith and ideology in the world village. There are many faces of the divine. Dialogue must begin, then, with some measure of humility in the face of the mystery of the Transcendent, however we understand it, and with some acknowledgement that others have glimpsed a part of it as well.



By Elliott & Fry. Public domain.



The diversity of the human family should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord. If you meet those of different race and color from yourself, do not mistrust them and...withdraw yourself into your shell of conventionality, but rather, be glad and show them kindness. Think of them as different coloured roses growing in the beautiful garden of humanity, and rejoice to be among them.

'Abdu'l-Bahá



Through authentic interreligious dialogue, we can help each other overcome the sense of separateness and alienation that keeps us from awakening to the unity and wonder that is at the heart of ordinary living...Authentic dialogue demands a special kind of freedom that only people truly at home in their given faith traditions can achieve. Genuine dialogue demands that we look into the blind spots of our traditions through the eyes of another; it demands that we are secure enough in where we come from to risk venturing where we have never been.

Rabbi Rami Shapiro

Dialogue is not so much about attempting to resolve immediate conflicts, but about building a "community of conversation" across racial, ethnic and religious barriers where people learn to see differences among themselves not as threatening but as "natural" and "normal." Dialogue thus is an attempt to help people to understand and accept the other in their "otherness."

Dr. S. Wesley Ariarajah

Passing over

Featuring Dr. John S. Dunne

Passing over is a shifting of standpoint, a going over to the standpoint of another culture, another way of life, another religion. It is followed by an equal and opposite process we might call “coming back,” coming back with new insight to one’s own culture, one’s own way of life, one’s own religion. The holy person of our time, it seems, is not a figure like Gotama [Buddha] or Jesus or Mohammed, a person who could found a world religion, but a figure like [Mahatma] Gandhi, a person who passes over by sympathetic understanding from her/his own religion to other religions, and comes back again with new insight to her/his own [religion]. Passing over and coming back, it seems, is the spiritual adventure of our time.

You don’t get harmony when everybody sings the same note.

Doug Floyd

When we change the way we look at things, the things we look at change.

Dr. Wayne Dyer

The opposite of a correct statement is a false statement. But the opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth.

Dr. Niels Henrik David Bohr

The goal is not to achieve wholeness by suppressing diversity, nor to make wholeness impossible by enthroning diversity, but to preserve both. Each element in the diversity must be respected, but each element must ask itself sincerely what it can contribute to the whole. I don’t think it is venturing beyond the truth to say that “wholeness incorporating diversity” defines the transcendent task for our generation.

John Gardner

John Archibald Wheeler, one of the most thoughtful astrophysicists of our time, ends a major essay with the remark that we only begin to understand the universe and to grasp how simple it is when we begin to see how strange, unexpected and different it is from what we had imagined. This is true also of religion. Not only do we begin to understand in [the context of] genuine, profound and personal...[interfaith dialogue]...how strange and different and also unsuspectedly familiar the “other’s” religion is, but we also begin to understand something of the extraordinary strangeness of our own religion, which we believed we knew and were familiar with.

Dr. Klaus Klostermaier

Comforted by how much we share, we are able to delight in our differences.

Raffi

Hinduism
This is the sum of duty:
do not do to others what would
cause pain if done to you
Mahabharata 5:1517

Buddhism
Treat not others in ways
that you yourself would
find hurtful
The Buddha, Udāna-Varga 5:18



Participants at an event hosted by the Cornwall Interfaith Partnership during World Interfaith Harmony Week. Cornwall, Ontario., Canada. 2016.

Dialogue is not debate

Featuring Dr. Helene Ijaz



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Debate is competitive; dialogue is collaborative. The purpose of debate is to defeat the opponent by winning an argument; dialogue seeks to achieve deeper knowledge and understanding of the other party. In a debate, both sides have fixed positions to which they adhere rigidly and both seek to prove that they are right and the other wrong. In a dialogue, both parties are open to changing their minds. Dialogue is open-ended and seeks to explore different perspectives and solutions with the goal of achiev-

Continued on page 14...

Native Spirituality
We are as much alive
as we keep the earth alive
Chief Dan George

Unitarian principle
We affirm and promote respect
for the interdependent
of which we are a part
Unitarian principle



Judaism
What is hateful to you
do not do to your neighbor
This is the whole Torah
all the rest is commentary
Hillel, Talmud, Shabbat 31a



Sikhism
I am a stranger to no one;
and no one is a stranger
to me. Indeed, I am
a friend to all
Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1299



Jainism
One should treat all
creatures in the world
as one would like
to be treated
Mahavira, Sutakritanga



Christianity
In everything, do to others
as you would have them
do to you; for this is the
law and the prophets
Jesus, Matthew 7:12

...Continued from page 13

ing a common understanding. In a debate, individuals sometimes seek to undermine their opponent's position by finding flaws and weaknesses in it, or by discrediting the other person and their cause. By contrast, dialogue is conducted in a compassionate and mutually respectful manner. Debate is divisive; dialogue is transformative. Dialogue is conducive to producing and maintaining a balanced, caring, relationship between the parties.

Scarboro Missions



At World Youth Day 2002 in Toronto, Canada, 200 Muslim and Catholic youth gather for an evening of dialogue. The event was co-sponsored by the Toronto Muslim community and Scarboro Missions.

UNITY AND GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Authentic interfaith practice has the capacity to engender in the practitioner a transformation of consciousness. The interfaith odyssey involves a journey from tribal consciousness to global consciousness, from individualist consciousness to universalist consciousness, from dualistic consciousness to unitive consciousness. This experience of transformation and expanded consciousness manifests as compassion – a compassion that has the potential to extend to all sentient beings and all life forms. All of this is wonderfully summarized by Rumi in the opening quotation.

Is it true that the one I love is everywhere?
Rumi

How shall we say who we are now that we
know we are all one?
Dr. Beatrice Bruteau

The old question is “Who am I?” The new
question is “Who are we?”
Linda O’Neill

When I do not know who I am, I serve you.
When I know who I am, I am you.
The Ramayana

To love is to recognize yourself in another.
Eckhart Tolle

What if our religion was each other?
Ganga White

Scarboro Missions



I am because
we are.

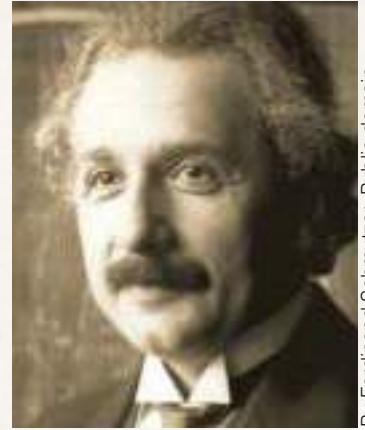
African philosophy of Ubuntu

Left: African women sifting grain.

Widening our circle of compassion

Featuring Dr. Albert Einstein

Although we human beings are part of a whole, the “Universe,” we experience ourselves as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of our consciousness. This delusion is a prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.



By Ferdinand Schmutzer. Public domain.

Unity, not uniformity, must be our aim.
We attain unity only through variety.
Mary Parker Follett

The soul’s oldest memory is of union. And
the soul’s deepest longing is for reunion.
Source unknown

Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be
the beauty and the test of our civilization.
Mohandas K. Gandhi

Human beings are forever searching for
“universal intimacy” – a sense of total
belonging... The quest for universal
intimacy is the very essence of what
we mean by transcendence.
Jeremy Rifkin

All things are our relatives;
what we do to everything,
we do to ourselves.
All is really one.

Black Elk

To become enlightened is to become
intimate with all things.
Dogen Kenji



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Love your
neighbour as
yourself
because your
neighbour is
yourself.

JW Windland

The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me.
Meister Eckhart



If you can't see
God in all, you
can't see God
at all.

Yogi Bhajan

Once you truly find God, you are open
to all faiths.
Karen Armstrong

Wherever you
turn, there is
the face of God.

Qur'an al-Baqarah 2:115



The interior life of one person is not an
exclusively private domain but rather a
forum where the lives of all persons are
made manifest: I am part and parcel of
the whole and I cannot find God apart
from the rest of humanity.

Mohandas K. Gandhi

Many people know that the drop
merges into the ocean...but few know
that the ocean merges into the drop.

Kabir



We are here to
awaken from
the illusion
of our
separateness.

Thich Nhat Hanh

The Earth is but
one country,
and mankind
its citizens.

Bahá'u'lláh



I now understand that my welfare is only
possible if I acknowledge my unity with all
people of the world without exception.

Leo Tolstoy

The love of one's country is a splendid
thing. But why should love stop at the
border?

Pablo Casals

Strangers are just friends I haven't met yet.

Will Rogers

God is friendship.

Saint Aelred of Rievaulx



Namaste prayer

**I honour the place within you
in which the entire universe resides;
I honour the place within you of love,
of light, of peace;
I honour the place within you where,
when you are in that place within you,
and I am in that place within me,
there is only one of us.**

My religion is kindness.

*His Holiness
the Dalai Lama*



Photo by Luca Galuzzi. Public domain.

Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind.

Henry James

The heart of the person before you is a mirror – see there your own form.

Shinto proverb



Empathy is your pain in my heart.

Halford Luccock

See yourself in others. Then, whom can you hurt? What harm can you do?

The Buddha

The whole world is you. Yet you keep thinking there is something else.

Hsueh-Feng

I am large, I contain multitudes.

Walt Whitman

When two people relate to each other authentically and humanly, God is the electricity that surges between them.



All real living is meeting.

Martin Buber



By Blisen. Joop van/Anefo. Public domain.

Arnold Toynbee predicted that a thousand years from now, when historians look back on the twentieth century, they will be very little interested in the conflicts between communism and capitalism, but they will see it as a period in which Eastern and Western religions interpenetrated one another and took the first steps towards building a genuine world civilization. Each religious tradition, in as much as it has nourished certain valuable insights, will have a significant contribution to make toward the emerging global civilization.
*Dr. Ewert H. Cousins and
Dr. K. L. Seshagiri Rao*



Public domain.

One day we
will wake up
and discover
that we are
family.

*Archbishop
Desmond Tutu*

But is there no common factor, no underlying principle as the basis of the world's religions?...The similarity [among religions] has to do not with their respective conceptions of the Ultimate...It has to do with the existence of human suffering and humankind's ability to extricate itself from it. None of us desire misery and all of us want happiness; and these are the very issues upon which the world's religions focus...So in a way, dialogue is based on one identity, our common humanity.
Thubten Losel

An inescapable network of mutuality

*Featuring
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.

If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.

Mother Teresa



Kingkongphoto & www.celebrity-photos.com. Public domain.

An injury to one is an injury to all.
Motto of Industrial Workers of the World

We are each other's teachers inasmuch as we are each other's students.

Source unknown

If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.

His Holiness, the Dalai Lama

When we dream alone it is only a dream; but when many dream together it is the beginning of a new reality.

Friedensreich Hundertwasser

We should act toward other nations as we wish them to act toward us.

(American) President Millard Fillmore

We need to interpret the Golden Rule globally, creating a climate of opinion where it becomes absolutely unacceptable to treat other peoples, other races, other nations, other faiths, as we would not wish to be treated ourselves. If we do not achieve this, we are unlikely to have a viable world to hand on to the next generation. We need urgently to make the compassionate voice of religion and of all morality sing out loud and clear in our dangerously polarized world in order to challenge the voices of hatred, exclusion, chauvinism and extremism.

Karen Armstrong

Photo: Interfaith educator Tina Petrova (R) presents the multifaith Scarborough Missions Golden Rule poster to Karen Armstrong, author, world-renowned historian of religion, and founder of the Charter of Compassion movement. Toronto, Canada. 2009.

Peace among the nations

Featuring Rev. Dr. Hans Kung

**No peace among the nations
without peace among the religions.**

**No peace among the religions
without dialogue
between the religions.**

**No dialogue between the religions
without investigation of the
foundation of religions.**



Photo courtesy of Tina Petrova.



We affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Seventh principle of Unitarian Universalism

To overcome suffering, we must attain enlightenment. Enlightenment could be described as a direct and living experience of the interconnectedness of all things. When we are mindful of the interconnectedness of all things, it becomes impossible for us to harm other beings. This becomes a natural ethic of compassion. For this reason, respect for all sentient beings is a core value of Buddhism.

Franz Li

We, people of diverse religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions throughout the world, hereby establish the United Religions Initiative to promote enduring daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously-motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.

Preamble, the Charter of the United Religions Initiative (URI)



We are interdependent. Each of us depends on the well-being of the whole, and so we have respect for the community of living beings, for people, animals, and plants, and for the preservation of Earth, the air, water and soil... We must treat others as we wish others to treat us. We make a commitment to respect life and dignity, individuality and diversity, so that every person is treated humanely, without exception.

Towards a Global Ethic

Parliament of the World's Religions



Treat others and the planet as you would like to be treated.

Motto of International Golden Rule Day (April 5)



Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world...

*Opening words of Preamble
Universal Declaration of Human Rights
United Nations*

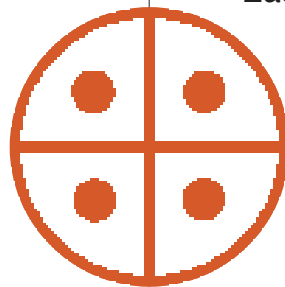


Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 18, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations

We are as much alive as we keep the Earth alive.

Chief Dan George



We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life and to the future generations.

Earth Charter (Preamble)



The universe is circles within circles, and everything is one circle, and all the circles are connected to each other.

Each family is a circle, and those family circles connect together and make a community, and the community makes its circle where it lives on the Earth. It [the community] cares for that part [of the Earth] but cares for it as a circle – which is to say – in a co-operative and egalitarian way, where everybody is cared for, and everybody is respected.

Black Elk



Creating pluralistic societies

Featuring His Highness Karim Aga Khan

Pluralistic societies are not accidents of history. They are a product of enlightened education and continuous investment by governments and all of civil society in recognizing and celebrating the diversity of the world's peoples... Pluralism is no longer simply an asset or a prerequisite for progress and development, it is vital to our existence.

If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

Lilla Watson

Justice is what love looks like in public.

Dr. Cornel West

Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will emerge for the better in the sphere of our being as humans.

Vaclav Havel

Some spiritual practices are designed to enable the practitioner to awaken to a unity or oneness that already exists, rather than to create or bring about unity. Accordingly, can we not suggest that interfaith practice enables dialogue partners to awaken to an already-existing unity, rather than to create or bring about unity?

Paul McKenna

All things are one.

Heraclitus

Unlearning prejudice

Featuring Mark Twain

Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men [and women] and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the Earth all one's lifetime.



Truth is One;
sages call it by
various names.

Rig Veda
(Hindu sacred text)



I am a stranger
to no one; and
no one is a
stranger to me.
Indeed, I am a
friend to all.

Guru Granth Sahib, p.1299
(Sikh sacred text)



O humanity! Truly,
we have created
you from male
and female and
made you into
nations and tribes
so that you may
come to know another.

Qur'an 49:13 (Islamic sacred text)

I grant forgiveness to
all living beings
And all living beings grant
forgiveness to me
My friendship is with all
living things

My enmity is non-existent.

Jain prayer



How good and
pleasant it is that
brothers and
sisters dwell
together as one.

Psalms 133
(Hebrew sacred text)



THE TRANSFORMATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Any genuine experience of faith or interfaith has the capacity to bring about a transformation of consciousness. This experience of self-transcendence, this process of awakening, this opening of the heart involves a journey of purification from ego-centrism to other-centrism. The dynamics of this all-important journey are examined in this series of quotations. Richard Rohr starts us off with a poignant statement.

[Religion] isn't about joining a club but about undergoing a transformation of consciousness.

Rev. Richard Rohr

To see "the other" as God-in-hiding.

Dr. Jean Houston

In dialogue, we allow what is beautiful, peaceful and meaningful in the other to transform us.

Thich Nhat Hanh



Public domain.

If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, Infinite.

William Blake

By dialogue, we let God be present in our midst, for as we open ourselves to one another, we open ourselves to God.

Pope John Paul II

At their spiritual core, the world's great spiritual traditions offer...a technology of transcendence. The great religious traditions can be viewed...at their mystical core...as road maps and technologies for the induction of transcendent states of consciousness.

Dr. Roger Walsh

Our normal waking consciousness...is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different...No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded.

William James

Transcendence is a fact of life. Our brains are wired for it. We seek it out. We look for moments [of transcendence]...when we listen to music or read a poem..when we get that sense of being touched deeply within, lifted momentarily beyond ourselves and feel that we inhabit our humanity a bit more fully than usual.

Karen Armstrong

Human beings are forever searching for “universal intimacy” – a sense of total belonging...The quest for universal intimacy is the very essence of what we mean by transcendence.

Jeremy Rifkin

Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will emerge for the better in the sphere of our being as humans.

Vaclav Havel

Problems cannot be solved at the level of consciousness in which they were created. We shall require a substantial new manner of thinking if humankind is to survive.

Dr. Albert Einstein

To listen to another is to take something of the other into ourselves, to risk being changed by what the other has to say to us.

Project Listening

Genuine interfaith dialogue requires that you overcome your fear of the unknown by learning to build trust in the goodness of the unknown instead of experiencing it as threat.

Dr. Helene Ijaz

As you welcome whatever you find alien within yourself, extend that same welcome to whatever you find alien in the outer world.

Dr. Parker J. Palmer

Interspirituality

Featuring Brother Wayne Teasdale

Mysticism is the awakening to and cultivation of transcendental consciousness. It is unitive awareness. All forms of mystical wisdom are unitive, that is, non-dual. This is a significant point of convergence among the religions themselves....Interspirituality...is a term to describe the breaking down of the barriers that have separated the religions for millenia. It is also the crossing-over and sharing in the spiritual, aesthetic, moral and psychological treasures that exist in the spiritualities of the world religions. The deepest level of sharing is in and through one another's mystical wisdom.



Good thoughts, good words,
good deeds.

*The three fundamental principles
of Zoroastrianism*

Everyone can be turned to gold if they are
willing to engage in the arduous work of
transformation.

Andrew Harvey



**When the power
of love overcomes
the love of power,
the world will
know peace.**

Jimi Hendrix

We are here to awaken from the illusion of
our separateness.

Thich Nhat Hanh

Love is the very difficult realization that
something besides myself exists...Love is
the discovery of reality.

Iris Murdoch

The real voyage of discovery consists not
in seeking new landscapes, but in having
new eyes.

Marcel Proust

Everything has its beauty, but not everyone
sees it.

Confucius

**How wonderful it is
that nobody need
wait a single
moment before
starting to improve
the world.**

Anne Frank



Anne Frank Stichting, Amsterdam;
Public domain.

Be the change that
you wish to see in the world.

Source unknown

Be here now.

Baba Ram Dass

God is not somewhere else.

Source unknown

God does not want to be believed in, to be
debated and defended by us, but simply to
be realized through us.

Martin Buber

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall
see God.

Jesus of Nazareth

Every saint is your future.

Dr. Deepak Chopra

About the ego

Featuring Thomas Merton

Both Christianity and Buddhism agree that the root of humanity's problem is that our consciousness is all fouled up and we do not apprehend reality as it fully is; that the moment we look at something, we begin to interpret it in ways that are prejudiced and predetermined to fit a certain wrong picture of the world in which we exist as individual egos in the center of things. From this basic ignorance, which is our experience of ourselves as absolutely autonomous individual egos, from this basic wrong experience of ourselves comes all the rest. This is the source of all our problems.

The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton published by New Directions. Used with Permission of the Merton Legacy Trust.

Only that day dawns to
which we are awake.

Henry David Thoreau

"I am awake"

When the people carried their
puzzlement to the Buddha himself,
the answer he gave provided a
handle for his entire message:

"Are you a god?"

"No."

"Are you an angel?"

"No."

"Are you a saint?"

"No."

"Then, what are you?"

"I am awake."

Buddhist teaching tradition



Scarboro Missions

**Buddhist talk of
the no-self and
Christian talk
of the new self
seem to be com-
plementary ways
of saying that the
selfless self is
the true self.**

Rev. Dr. Ovey Mohammed, S.J.

One day we will wake up and discover
that we are family.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Everyone wants to live on top of the
mountain, but all the happiness and
growth occurs while you are climbing it.

Andy Rooney

There is no coming to consciousness without pain...One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.

Dr. Carl G. Jung

There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.

Leonard Cohen

Stay in the spiritual fire. Let it cook you.

Rumi

Truth comes as conqueror only to those who have lost the art of receiving it as friend.

Rabindranath Tagore

There is nothing that strengthens the ego more than being right...For you to be right, of course, you need someone else to be wrong.

Eckhart Tolle



By Kyle Hoobin; www.bluecollar-buddha.com. Public domain.

The Buddha is that human being who has discovered the bankruptcy of the ego's agenda to liberate itself from itself.

Dr. James Finley

There is only one thing worse than the individual ego, and that is the collective ego.

Rev. Richard Rohr, OFM



By Center for Action and Contemplation. Public domain.

If you believe that only your religion is the Truth, you are using it in service of the ego. Used in such a way, religion becomes ideology and creates an illusory sense of superiority as well as division and conflict between people.

Eckhart Tolle

The ego does not go gently to its own funeral; but to its own funeral, the ego must necessarily go if we are to be free.

Paul McKenna

Die before you die.

Rumi

First you must get rid of...the individual ego, then you must get rid of the...family ego, then goes the...national ego, and finally the...religious ego. Our ultimate identity is not in our ego, our family, our country, or our religion. When we discover this, we truly become children of God.

Yasutani Hakuun Roshi

Mahatma Gandhi identified himself completely with the poor and the weak, with *Daridranarayan* (God as manifested in the meek and the wretched)...Self-realization is impossible without service of and identification with the poorest.

Raghavan Iyer

Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of individuals is changed first. We pledge to increase our awareness by disciplining our minds, by meditation, by prayer or by positive thinking. *Towards a Global Ethic, the Parliament of World's Religions*

If religion is not part of the solution, it will become part of the problem.

Rabbi (Dr.) Jonathan Sacks

No matter how altruistic its announcements, a rigid religion will produce judgement, because there will always be "others" who believe differently...Judgement leads to discrimination and, all too often, to persecution. Dogma can never bring us together to understand each other in our shared humanity.

Marlene Winell

We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.

Jonathan Swift

When Christians make the claim that only through Christ can one be saved, they display a fatal lack of trust in the power of other religious traditions to enlighten, edify, redeem, and transform. They mistrust ultimately the power of God to gather followers into the ways of wisdom and to reveal multiple levels of reality and consciousness. In the end, fundamentalists of any religious persuasion mistrust the very premise underlying the title of William James's classic work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. To admit to "varieties" is to lose the monopoly of one's own experience.

Rev. Dr. Robin R. Meyers



by Benjamin D. Maxham. Public domain.

It is never too late to give up
your prejudices.

Henry David Thoreau

Two Mystical Perspectives on “the other”

Featuring Dr. Sam Keen



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In his ground-breaking volume, Faces of the Enemy – The Psychology of Enmity, American writer, Sam Keen, argues that prejudice, enemy-making and war-making are often rooted in a paranoia which he also sees as a form of anti-religious mysticism. In Keen’s words:

“As a mode of perception that often becomes a style of life, paranoia weaves around the vulnerable self or group an air-tight metaphysic and world view. Paranoia is anti-religious mysticism based on the feeling or perception that the world in general and others in particular, are against me or us. Reality is perceived as hostile.

By contrast, the religious mystic experiences the ground of being as basically friendly to the deepest needs of the self. That which is unknown, strange and beyond our comprehension is with and for us rather than against us...

The paranoid individual or community operates on the supposition that what is strange or foreign is aligned in a hostile conspiracy against us. A single network of malevolent intent stretches over the world. ‘They’ are out to get us.

As the religious mystic turns to and trusts in God or the ground of being, the paranoid mystic organizes life around combat against the enemy.”

The Editor

LISTENING AND DIALOGUE

Listening is arguably that skill which is most vital in the practice of effective dialogue. But as Olivia Mclvor reminds us in the opening quotation, listening does not come naturally to we, the members of the human species. It must be learned and re-learned through constant practice.

Hearing is part of our physiology. Listening, however, is a learned behaviour and requires constant self-discipline and practice.

Olivia Mclvor

Our listening creates a sanctuary for the homeless parts within another person.

Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen

To listen to another is to take something of the other into ourselves, to risk being changed by what the other has to say to us.

Project Listening

What does it mean to listen to a voice before it is spoken? It means making space for the other, being aware of the other, paying attention to the other, honoring the other.

Dr. Parker J. Palmer

To “listen” another’s soul into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be almost the greatest service that any human being ever performs for another.

Douglas Steere



Used with permission.

Being listened to is so close to being loved that most people can't tell the difference.

Kay Lindahl

It's not what you say, it's what they hear.

Red Auerbach

Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.

Winston Churchill

Wisdom is the reward for listening over a lifetime.

Doug Larson

Knowledge talks, but wisdom listens.

Jimi Hendrix

The mystics say that eventually you have to shut up.

Rabbi Rami Shapiro

I should sell my tongue and buy a thousand ears.
Rumi

Listen, or your tongues will keep you deaf.
Native American proverb

The deeper a truth is, the more deeply attentive we must be in order to hear it.
Dr. James Finley

A riot is the language of the unheard.
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Only when the oppressed are heard, can we have an honest, solutions-based dialogue.
Opal Tometi



Matt @ PEK from Taipei, Taiwan. Public domain.

On Listening

Featuring Dr. Scott Peck

You cannot truly listen to anyone and do anything else at the same time.



Listening well is an exercise of attention and by necessity hard work. It is because they do not realize this or because they are not willing to do the work that most people do not listen well.



An essential part of true listening is the discipline of bracketing, the temporary giving up or setting aside of one's own prejudices, frames of reference and desires, so as to experience as far as possible the speaker's world from the inside, to step inside his or her shoes.



Since true listening involves a setting aside of the self, it also temporarily involves a total acceptance of the other. Sensing this acceptance, the speaker will feel less and less vulnerable, and more and more inclined to open up the inner recessions of his or her mind to the listener. As this happens, speaker and listener begin to appreciate each other more and more, and the dance of love is begun again.

Listen to the birds sing...

Featuring Shunryu Suzuki

Shunryu Suzuki (1905-1971) was a Zen Buddhist monk and teacher who helped popularize Zen Buddhism in the United States. On one occasion, the Japanese-born monk was asked to explain his understanding of consciousness. His response: “Well, I don’t know anything about consciousness. I just try to teach my students how to hear the birds sing.”

The Editor



By Charles J Sharp. Public domain.

A lot of problems in the world would disappear if we talked to each other instead of about each other.

Source unknown

I think that right now, with everything from large-scale wars to the smaller wars people have in their homes, it’s become more convenient to kill people than to sit down and talk to them.

Tracy Chapman

When you are willing to hear, you in turn are more likely to be heard.

Irshad Manji

If you create a space where you invite people to tell you their narrative and you are empowering people with respect, you will get people to listen to you in turn.

Yossi Klein Halevi

A person is bored to death listening over and over to a story that he’s never heard.

G.K. Chesterton

Really listening is giving people a chance to change your mind.

Alan Alda

If your mouth is open, you’re not listening.

Source unknown

Before you speak, let your words pass through three gates: At the first gate, ask yourself “Is it true?” At the second gate ask, “Is it necessary?” At the third gate ask, “Is it respectful?”...“Does it improve on the silence?”

Rumi

Unless you can listen,
you cannot hear.

Yo-Yo Ma



Deep listening cultivates a
spiritual practice.

Kay Lindahl

Listening is the beginning
of prayer.

Mother Teresa

Real listening is about being vulnerable.
Krista Tippett

Listen. The ear never lies.
Bernie Krause

Everything that needs to be said has
already been said. But since no one was
listening, everything must be said again.
Andre Gide

Most people do not listen with the intent to
understand; they listen with the intent to
reply.
Dr. Stephen R. Covey

Never pass up the opportunity to keep your
mouth shut.
Will Rogers

If people want to increase their ability to
understand another person, they [should]
start out by listening to nature...and when
we become better listeners to nature, we
become better listeners to each other.
Gordon Hempton

Unknown author. Public domain.



**How can we claim
that the years
have taught us
anything if we
have not learned
to sit and listen
to the secret that
whispers in the
brook.**

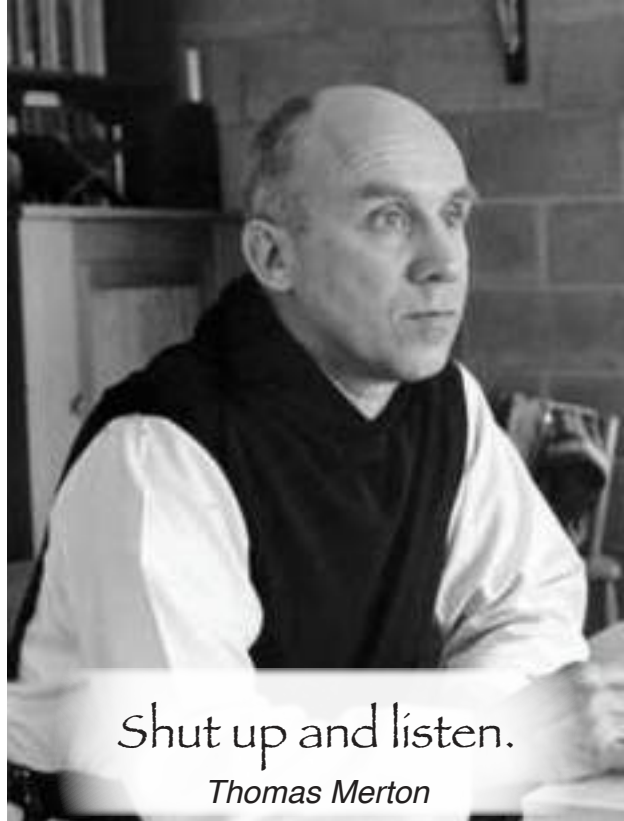
Dr. Carl G. Jung

Wisdom is divided into
two parts:
1) having a lot to say;
2) not saying it.

Source unknown

Forget about enlightenment. Sit down
wherever you are and listen to the wind
singing in your veins.
Dr. John Welwood

Listen, my heart, to the whispering of the
world. That is how it makes love to you.
Rabindranath Tagore



Shut up and listen.
Thomas Merton

By John Howard Griffin. Used with permission of the Merton Legacy Trust and the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University

Can I listen through your ears?
Source unknown

A koan on listening
**If a story is told and there is no one
there to hear it, is it really a story?
Was it ever told?**



Listen if you can stand to.
Rumi

Artistic depiction. Public domain.

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**There is no
greater agony
than bearing an
untold story
inside you.**
Maya Angelou

An enemy is one whose story we have
not heard.
Gene Knudsen Hoffman

We have two ears and one mouth so that
we can listen twice as much as we speak.
Epictetus

I would like to find a person who has forgotten the use and meaning of words... so that I might have a word with that person.
Source unknown



Those who know don't talk. Those who talk don't know.

Tao Te Ching

The more faithfully you listen to the voice within you, the better you hear what is sounding outside of you.
Dag Hammarskjold

The quieter you become, the more you can hear.
Baba Ram Dass

Photo by jeanbaptisteparis. Public domain.



Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.

Arundhati Roy

Silence actually teaches us to listen... to listen to the voice within us...to listen to ourselves...to listen to one another.
Chris Heuertz

Silence is God's first language. Everything else is a poor translation.
Rev. Thomas Keating, OCSO

◆ **Editorial and design team** ◆

Editor: Paul McKenna: interfaithgold@gmail.com
Editorial consultants: Chris Atkinson, Kathy Gillis, Leslie Mezei, Rev. Michelle Singh, Rev. David Warren SFM
Graphic designer: Kathy Gillis
Design consultants: Chris Atkinson, Hector Acero Ferrer, Gregory McKenna, Leslie Mezei, Kathy Murtha, Rev. Michelle Singh, Vaughn Thurman, Karen Watson

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