

mysterious being which subjects men to perform useless acts and meaningless movements. All compulsory forms of worship are designed as exercises and training to enable people to acquire correct morals and habits and to live righteously, and to adhere to these virtues till the end, whatever the changes be in their circumstances.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

The awakening of man begins when he discovers his own identity and recognizes the identity of all around him. For all are one, all are divine, all are part of the whole.

Cultivate that attitude of Oneness, between men of all creeds, all countries and all continents. That is the message of love.

Light the lamp of love within your hearts and let love flow so you become beacons of love and light. Let the Love flow so it cleanses the world and man can live in peace.

Love one another and help others to rise to the higher levels, simply by pouring out love. Love is infectious and the greatest healing energy.

Sikh

The founders of Sikh religion were visionary. They brought about harmony by improving the spiritual well being of the people and encouraging social cohesion through the institutions they established during their lifetime. These stand out as a beacon in today's troubled world. They preached the oneness of God and brotherhood of mankind and took the unusual and extraordinary step of including the compositions of Muslim and Hindu saints in Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh Holy Scripture). The contributors came from all levels of society and were from linguistically, ethnically, geographically diverse regions of India.

The Sikh Gurus established new townships; encouraging business and trade, and building artificial lakes and digging wells for people to draw water. Above all they started the institution of 'langgar' requiring people to sit together and eat together at the Gurdwara. It encouraged people to share, prepare and eat together thus removing social divisions and social inequality and inequity.

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Interfaith Annual Gathering 2010

Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures

“Celebrating Difference, Growing Together”



Aboriginal

Many Australians don't understand Aboriginal spiritual beliefs. In fact, colonisers neither saw nor recognised the rich store of spiritual belief that Aboriginal Australians possessed. By declaring Aboriginal territories 'terra nullius' (no man's land), the colonisers of Australia paved a political and social space that allowed many to discount the spiritual beliefs that Aboriginal people have with their land, waters and resources. This belief system upholds and values ancestral beings, sacred sites, art, ceremony, ritual, totems, values, lore and social structures.

Today, many Aboriginal people live in urban areas where the decimation of culture and spirituality is more strongly felt. However, those same Aboriginal spiritual beliefs held prior to colonisation continue to have a much greater significance than simply being a distant tie to the past. These spiritual beliefs underpin values and choices that urban Aboriginal people make in their everyday lives despite the consequences of colonisation. Today, contemporary urban Aboriginal people reconcile spirituality, religion, ritual and death even though so much appears to be lost.

Baha'i

... Consider the world of created beings, how varied and diverse they are in species, yet with one sole origin. All the differences that appear are these of outward form and colour.

So it is with humanity. It is made up of many races, and its peoples are of different colour, white, black, yellow, brown and red - but they all come from the same God, and all are servants to Him...

The diversity in 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.

... when you meet those whose opinions differ from your own, do not turn away your face from them. All are seeking truth, and there are many roads leading thereto.

Truth has many aspects, but it remains always and forever one.

Brahma Kumaris

Imagine the most beautiful tree possible. It is vibrant and energetic and alive. It is red and gold and the palest of yellow. There are dark leaves and light ones. Flowers and fruits, berries and leaves and branches of every size are growing together, vibrant and energetic and alive.

This tree is humanity. It is us. It is you and it is me. We need all the flowers and fruit, all the colours and textures... all the differences. That's what makes it beautiful. It needs help. It needs us.

We need to send love to every branch - to gather it up like an invisible gift and wrap it with our most heartfelt, caring wishes. Then, with the power of thought, we can send this gift to the whole tree. After all, we are the ones, every one of us, who will awaken one morning to find the gift in our own hands. Barbara Bossert Ramsay© 2010

Buddhist

In the Buddha-Dhamma culture, we all need to understand more about ourselves and others. This will be expressed in our manner of living and thinking, in living art, religion, ethical aspirations, and knowledge that we gather in our daily life. In this changing world, we need to free the mind of self and all that it implies.

Buddha-Dhamma becomes great only to the extent that one has progressed in ethical discipline and mental culture. We should think of culture in this way. Beginning with the Five Precepts, positively and negatively, we gradually reduce our greed and hatred and develop habits of kindness and compassion, honesty and truthfulness, chastity and heedfulness.

Habits are the basis of good character, without which no culture is possible. We become great and cultured Buddhists. Such a person is rightly trained in body, speech, and mind, able to live in peace and harmony with himself and others. This indeed is Dhamma.

Christian

During the last one hundred years many branches of the Christian Church have come closer together in the Ecumenical Movement, a form of rapprochement. Churches have grown to appreciate their oneness in God and Jesus Christ and with each other while at the same time learning to respect differences.

The World Council of Churches has gathered Christians of diverse traditions together to worship, learn and to seek ways to further peace and justice and reconciliation in the world. At the same time, national bodies of churches work as one in various ways, for example, in aid giving in areas of need such

as the aftermath of earthquakes, floods and dislocation of peoples through war. Our Interfaith commitment is also rapprochement.

Hindu

In Sanskrit, the underlying reality of life is addressed thus: Advaita meaning NOT TWO. Meera the lovable mystic of India sings, you and I are not we, you and I are one, there is no division, no fragmentation in life at all, no matter how much we may appear to differ on the surface, the welfare of each one of us is inseparable from the welfare of all others.

Rig veda the scripture of Hindus declares "Truth is one; sages call it by various names". The Upanishads declare that all paths lead to the same goal, just as cows of variegated colours yield the same white milk. Affirming this universal truth, Temples all over India of the Ramakrishna and Sai Baba missions include all non Hindu gods along with Hindu gods. They celebrate Christmas as they would Deepavali. These saints are visionaries in the area of rapprochement between religions.

Jewish

The first call to peace between brothers was Abraham to his nephew Lot. "Please let there be no strife between me and you." Further, a basic tenet of religious faith is that man is created in God's image and to harm a man was to harm God.

The collective work of the Jewish Christian Muslim Association demonstrates that they have started to, and will continue to, discuss, learn and explore each religion sensitively and sincerely. There has been much common ground and difficult terrain covered in growing together, but they continue to explore together and develop long lasting friendships as they "Grow Together." Growing together is also evidenced by the many interfaith sacred spaces and the fact that many interfaith groups meet in churches, mosques and synagogues.

Muslim

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) has stated: "I have been sent only for the purpose of perfecting good morals." (Al-Muta)

That great message has left an indelible impression on the history of life; Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) worked ceaselessly to bring people under its influence. Its purpose was to strengthen the moral character of the people so that the world of beauty and perfection may be illuminated before their eyes and they may try to achieve it consciously and with knowledge.

Worshiping, a basic pillar of faith in Islam, has been made compulsory. Forms of worship are not mystic exercises that link men with some unknown,