Inter-religious relationships are one of God's special callings in our time. While the Church has always lived in a religiously pluralistic world, the rich diversity of different faiths is more apparent now than ever before.

Christians often find themselves face-to-face with neighbors and co-workers, relatives, strangers, and friends who belong to different religious traditions. This presents us with unique opportunities to witness, love, and serve “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). By learning practical ways to encounter people of diverse faiths, we discover opportunities to learn from them, to live in community with them, to develop mutual respect, and to discover areas of commonality.

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Getting to Know Neighbors of Other Faiths

A Theological Rationale for Interfaith Relationships
Christian Witness and Reconciliation with Others

Christians have been sent into the world to testify in word and deed to the God we know through Jesus Christ (John 17:18). Yet Christians have not always embodied God’s love in their relationships with people of other religious traditions. A lack of understanding and respect for other faiths has often resulted in fear, distrust, and the dehumanization of people in other religious traditions. Christian witness to God’s love seeks to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the world. That means conversing with, listening to, learning from, and living peacefully with those in the world who do not confess Jesus as Lord. Listening and sharing sometimes shows God’s love better than declarations of beliefs.

Peacemakers

As Christians, we are called to be peacemakers in the world. We look for ways to strengthen human life in community. But since Scripture speaks in many voices, it has sometimes been used to discount and divide people of different faiths from one another. Through encounters with people of other religions, Christians hope to find new understanding and to discover fuller and more meaningful ways to live in reconciled communities together.

Person and work of Christ

Through Jesus Christ humanity is invited to speak and respond to God. In Scripture, God not only speaks but listens, not only challenges, but waits. In the death and resurrection of Christ, God brings about the possibility for new relationships between God and humanity and between different human persons and communities. The work of Christ is to break down the walls of separation and alienation between peoples with each other and with God. New possibilities for relationship began in the vulnerability, risk, and faith of Jesus. A new reality is now available now for believers in Christ to make ourselves vulnerable and to take risks in our relationships with people of other faiths.

Spirit of God and Human Hope

Christians affirm that the Holy Spirit, who hovered over the waters when the earth was void and without form (Genesis 1:2), can bring order out of chaos and can reshape warped societies. Relationships with people of other religious traditions are shaped by the Holy Spirit who, like the wind, ‘blows where it chooses’ (John 3:8). While we do not always understand the Spirit’s purposes, we need never be without hope, for we nor the rest of creation are ever without the Spirit of God.