



Synopsis of Elijah's Guidelines on Interreligious Friendship

'Friendship Across Religions' Project

1. Understanding Interreligious Friendship

Basic guidelines and concerns that should govern interreligious friendship include the following:

- Interreligious friendship recognizes fundamental similarities between religions. These include the search for living in goodness and harmony and living an ethical life. Fundamental to interreligious friendship is awareness that the different religions seek to transcend ordinary life through aspiration and orientation of life toward a higher spiritual understanding of reality, or a supreme reality called by most believers 'God'.
- Interreligious friendship is characterized by a higher common interest, beyond self interest.
- Interreligious friendship is characterized by reciprocity and engages both sides to a relationship. Friendship is based on a mutual give and take.

2. Approaching Difference

Interreligious friendship is not friendship that casts aside religious difference, overlooking it in the interest of perceived commonality. Rather, it is friendship that keeps us mindful of religious difference and approaches this difference as a means of learning, growth and transformation that occur within the friendship. Religious difference can be approached as a source of blessing.

3. Upholding Identity

Maintaining the identity of our religious community is a primary concern of the teachings of our religions. The practice of interreligious friendship should not be a means of weakening or diluting identity. Rather, it should be a means of strengthening and deepening it.



The Fifth Bi-Annual Meeting of the Elijah Board of World Religious Leaders, Oxford (UK), March 2012

4. Practicing Speech

Practicing interreligious friendship is closely related to how we speak. Questioning is fundamental to interreligious friendship. Friends must be willing to question and to be questioned. Hard questions are part of honest speech, but must be clearly distinguished from attack or criticism. In interreligious friendships, the face of our friend is always before us. We learn to speak the same in the absence as in the presence of the friend.

5. Friendship in Action

Action is a primary arena for the manifestation of friendship. We expect support, collaboration and solidarity from our friends if issues pertaining to our well-being arise. Interreligious friendship can be based on common dedication to ideals or causes such as social justice, fighting hatred, poverty and illness. The commonality shared by friends finds expression through shared commitment and collaboration for the well-being of society and the world.

6. Friendship as Spiritual Gift

As we move from ignoring differences to recognizing, understanding and respecting our differences, we are also called to discover a deeper unity that transcends our differences. Love finds its fullest expression in a friendship that is consciously grounded in God, or in the ultimate reality.