



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

On the final day of the meeting, leaders were asked to reflect on what had been accomplished. They were asked to consider three questions:

- 1. What does Interreligious Friendship mean to you?*
- 2. How do you practise Interreligious Friendship?*
- 3. What messages and practices of Interreligious Friendship can you take back from this meeting to your community?*

Some chose to respond independently to each question while others integrated their answers.

## Metropolitan Nikitas Lulias

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### What does inter-religious friendship mean to me?

Inter-religious friendship means allowing the walls of separation to come down because of the trust, understanding, mutual respect and bonds (of love, as understood in the Greek verb "philo") that have been established. Friendship in this context means seeing, sharing and walking a common path of cooperation with the vision of shared goals. This form of friendship should also include a type of sensitivity that is characterized by humility where the "me" is transformed to become the "we". While I may believe that my religious is Truth, I can accept that the seeds of Truth are found in the teachings of my friend's faith and religious tradition.

### How can I practice it?

I can practice and express inter-religious friendship in everyday events through interpersonal relationships through the following ways:

1. Inviting clergy of other faith traditions to share in my own religious holidays (the meals associated with these) and my attending and sharing in the experiences of his/her tradition.
2. Attending services at the church, temple, space of worship on important feasts of other religious communities to demonstrate the bond of friendship that exists - and, to support that the local clergy (representative) in his/her struggle to show others that we have a bond of unity called friendship.
3. When making a visit to a hospital and visiting those ill, I can take a moment and speak, act, reach out to the "other" person, who might share the room, be in the hallway or some other area.



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### **What can I bring back to my own community?**

1. I can bring the resources and knowledge that I found in other communities - these may include things like music, hymns, art, foods, etc. - all things that can be used to strengthen understanding and bonds of friendships
2. I can bring children from my community to "play" with the children of another community - by establishing a playground for them and also having them share a common meal in the course of the day
3. Sponsoring trips for young people to live in "other" areas/places of the world where my young people become the "strangers in a strange land" - where they must learn another language, eat other foods, live with a family of another faith, etc.