



## 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.

## The Very Reverend June Osborne

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To be human is to be open, responsive and interdependent through friendship, and interreligious friendship is a natural extension of that vocation. Without our relatedness to the other, we are not fully human and will not inhabit well-being or find true meaning.

In particular, interreligious friendship:

- Generates wisdom for both the individual and the formation of religious community
- Contributes to religious authenticity
  - no religious tradition is sufficiently complete or spiritually deep as and of itself;
  - God is always beyond our manifestations and language and through interreligious friendship we are reminded that our desire to define Him and search for certitude risks limiting our sense of His mercy, compassion and forgiveness. We are encouraged to know God to be greater than our needs allow.
  - We are encouraged to take our own faith traditions more seriously.
- Is a way of testing 'true religion' and helping us to live by it. All religious communities and institutions live within their history of violence, oppression or abuse and are tempted to corruption in their present existence. Interreligious friendship helps us see ourselves as others see us and offers solutions which produce better religion.



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- Offers a way of challenging our social fear of difference. It protects those who may be victimized and celebrates the strength of diversity.
- Makes the empowerment of women more likely across the global community.

How can I practice it?

- By ensuring that I give time and priority to particular friendships across faith traditions.
- By raising the profile of interreligious networks and relationships in my own setting
- By inviting those from other faith traditions to share hospitality with me, in particular seeking out those of other faith traditions in my own diocese and exploring with them what are the options for interreligious friendship.
- Putting the Elijah Institute website in my 'favourites' list.

What can I bring back to my community?

1. The photo we took this morning and reflections from our meeting
2. A sense that interreligious friendship is important to me and could be transformative for our life.
3. The development of interreligious friendship across the Muslim-Christian divide in Sudan and South Sudan. Sheikh Nur and myself are pledged to develop our friendship and to arrange a meeting of Christian and Muslim leaders in September in the UK as a starting point for further dialogue.
4. To look for symbolic actions and images which convey to the visitors to our Cathedral and to the wider world that faith leaders model reconciliation and are committed together to social justice.
5. To affirm and, if possible extend, the interfaith programs done by our Education Department.