



The Anglican Church of Canada



Evangelical Lutheran
Church in Canada

January 14, 2021

Dear friends in faith and siblings in humanity,

As leaders of Canadian churches in 'full communion', we wish to encourage your observance of the *United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week* (WIHW) from February 1-7, 2021.

Begun in 2010, the annual WIHW has today become a preeminent opportunity for raising up the imperative of dialogue between religions and spiritual communities of all kinds for the sake of greater understanding, peaceful coexistence, and mutual collaboration for the common good. Its basic premise is that regardless of religion, faith, or system of belief, there is a common affirmation shared by many: that our highest convictions about life and meaning impact not only ourselves, but also compel us to love of our neighbours.

In 2012, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) endorsed a request to encourage the local observance of WIHW each year among people and congregations in their personal and communal prayers. Though in a less formalized way, members of the Anglican Church of Canada (ACoC) have also engaged in the week for several years through local events, services, and celebrations of various kinds. Our mutual commitments to www.acommonword.ca, made last year at this time, include lifting up WIHW. We have come to understand that WIHW is in agreement with the original vision of Indigenous elders for this Land, and we are happy to show respect to them in the respect we show to others.

We feel it is highly significant that WIHW takes place at the end of the liturgical season of Epiphany. Each year on January 6th we are reminded of a meeting between the child Jesus and some Seekers of Wisdom from a far away land. As followers of Christ in a religiously diverse time, we hear a call to cultivate encounter and relationship with neighbours who journey along different spiritual and religious paths. Histories and incidents of hostility and violence between faith communities amplify the significance of cultivating relationships as a contribution to the work of making peace.

The urgency for interreligious awareness and cooperation to respond to the many challenges facing the one human family continues to grow, and we believe it is a critical part of Christian discipleship today to commit ourselves to the way of genuine encounter and peacemaking with people of other faiths and beliefs. Together we therefore wholeheartedly endorse the global celebrations of WIHW,

and encourage the members of our churches to embrace its vision and aims as a faithful expression of their love of God turned outward into love for all others.

We offer the following list of possibilities for people and congregations to explore together when looking for ways to learn more and to get involved, not only during WIHW itself but throughout the year:

- Listen in on a Christian-Muslim Panel Discussion on “Religions at the Service of Fraternity in our World” organized by the Canadian National Muslim Christian Liaison Committee and the Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto, Jan. 28, 4:00-5:30pm Eastern: ([Register here](#))
- Attend an online WIHW Opening Ceremony event hosted by the Calgary Interfaith Council, Feb. 1, 7:00-8:00pm Mountain: ([Register here](#))
- Enjoy an online “Building Bridges Among Faith Traditions” Multifaith Concert organized by the Edmonton Interfaith Centre, Feb. 7, 2:00-5:00pm Mountain: ([Register here](#))
- Take part digitally in the 2021 Scarborough Missions Lecture in Interreligious Dialogue, Feb. 11, 7:30-9:00pm Eastern: ([Register here](#))
- Plan a local event (online and/or with health protocols as necessary) using this resource kit prepared by the UN: [How to Participate in World Interfaith Harmony Week](#)
- Review the resource materials collected in our new ACoC/ELCIC Common Word Canada website designed to encourage and support grassroots Christian-Muslim dialogues: [A Common Word Canada](#)
- Research the Anglican Communion’s study document the theological basis for Christian engagement in interfaith relations, [Generous Love: The Truth of the Gospel and the Call to Dialogue](#)
- Explore a recent set of essays authored by Lutheran scholars on interreligious learning produced by the Lutheran World Federation, [Loving Your Neighbour: Encouraging Constructive Interfaith Engagement](#)
- Reflect on the principles and suggestions contained the ELCIC’s resource [Encountering People of Other Faiths](#)
- Take a look at the ACoC’s [Guidelines for Interfaith Dialogue](#) and [Guidelines on worship involving Christians and people of other faith traditions](#)
- Get connected to the work of the [Canadian Interfaith Conversation](#), in which leaders in our two churches regularly participate alongside many others

Finally, as Christian leaders, we invite the members of our churches to consider praying with us daily, in both their private and gathered prayers, during the week of Feb. 1-7, 2021, using these or similar words:

O God, Creator of all, you have made us in our great diversity out of the abundance of your love. For the sake of that same love, you invite the whole of creation into your

welcoming embrace through your beauty and wisdom made manifest in the world – the same beauty and wisdom made known in the person of Jesus Christ. Grant that those who seek to draw closer towards his humble and hospitable way may also draw closer to our neighbours, that together we might share more fully in the peace and harmony that is your will for each one. Amen.

+ Susan Johnson

The Rev. Susan Johnson
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

+ Linda Nicholls

The Most Rev. Linda Nicholls,
Archbishop and Primate, Anglican Church of Canada

+ Mark MacDonald

The Most Rev. Mark MacDonald
National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop