Message on Honoring the Sacredness of Religious Others:
Reaffirming our Commitment to Positive Interfaith Relations

Christian Scriptures and Tradition attest to the experience of the Church in living side-by-side with those who are not part of the Christian community. From the prophets through the life and teachings of Jesus to the witness of the saints throughout the ages, the sources of our faith teach us to reach out to others in genuine friendship, to be agents of kindness, justice, harmony, and peace, and to be neighbors responsible to others without exception.

Indeed, as followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to demonstrate a love exemplified in the Trinitarian relationships of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe that the Church, as the body of Christ, is to be a transformative presence for building peaceable communities in the world. This calling makes it imperative to demonstrate respect for all people. Every person is created in the image and likeness of God and, therefore, possesses the inherent dignity and worth that comes from being God's child.

We, the delegates to the 2010 NCC/CWS General Assembly, meet at a time when interreligious strife is growing in our society. In the past few months, we have seen controversy over the building of Islamic houses of worship and media-hyped threats to burn the Muslim community's sacred scriptures. This Islamophobia is set within the larger context of fear and misunderstanding, which enable fear-mongering and reactionary responses.

As Christians, we condemn violence committed in the name of any religion, and we likewise condemn any response that seeks to visit violence in return. Because we believe that reconciliation is central to our mission as followers of the Prince of Peace, we affirm

The sanctity accorded of all houses of worship;
The sacredness invested by believers in their respective scriptures;
The God-given right to worship freely, according to one's conscience;
The holiness ascribed to prayer by those who seek God; and
The blessedness of religious devotion that leads to peace.

Finally, we encourage our member communions, and their congregations and seminaries, to sponsor or participate in study programs and multi-faith forums which enhance awareness of interfaith neighbors and build relationships with them. We do so in the hope that, at a time of rising religious sectarianism globally, these efforts will help lead to better understanding of one another, and to peace in our communities, nation and world.

Based on "Pillars of Peace for the 21st Century," a policy statement of the NCC and CWS (1999) and "Interfaith Relations and the Churches," a policy statement of the NCC and CWS (1999).

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