



**COUNCIL OF BISHOPS**  
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## **United Methodist Council of Bishops' Response to "A Common Word Between Us and You"**

We who are members of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church are writing to respond to the open letter titled, "A Common Word Between Us and You," signed by 138 leading Muslim clerics and scholars.

We are Christians who confess the apostolic and universal Christian faith according to the distinctive Wesleyan tradition. We are eager to enter into dialogue with people of other faiths so that we may learn from each other's distinctive beliefs and practices. As all persons are created in the image of God, we believe that it is important to affirm what we have in common with people of other faiths. While acknowledging differences, we also seek to identify shared theological concepts, moral teachings and spiritual disciplines. In a time of war, militarism and terrorism, global warming and environmental degradation, extreme poverty and pandemic disease, people of all faiths are called to join hands in common efforts in defense of the creation of God.

We receive with gratitude your letter, "A Common Word Between Us and You." We believe that it is always appropriate for Christians to seek common ground with people of other faiths, and especially because the critical needs of the world today demand interreligious understanding and cooperation.

In that letter, you propose that both Muslims and Christians hold in common a holy desire to fulfill the commandments to love God and neighbor. With abundant references to the writings in the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Bible, you demonstrate that both faiths teach that these two commandments are the greatest responsibilities of human beings. You emphasize that "the first and Greatest Commandment" is "to love God fully with one's own heart and soul and to be fully devoted to God," and that the commandment to love our neighbor includes not only "empathy and sympathy for the neighbor," but also "generosity and self-sacrifice."

Our hearts respond with joy to your proclamation that the primary purpose of human life is to love God and love our neighbors. We see this revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and so not only are we in agreement with you, but we are also inspired by the spiritual sensibility manifested in your discussion of the two great commandments. In our own Wesleyan tradition of the Christian faith, we believe and teach that God's salvation is holiness of life, and that holiness consists of love of God and love of neighbor. We believe that the living God is always acting in the world and in our lives to give us the understanding, desire, energy and ability to grow toward perfection in love of God and neighbor. In your appeal to Christians to find common ground, we sense the call of God to all of us at this moment in human history.

We are convinced in our own hearts that your words are true when you write, "If Muslims and Christians are not at peace, the world cannot be at peace." In our Wesleyan tradition, we believe that truth must be enacted in our lives. We join with you in seeking the illumination and guidance of God's Spirit in witnessing to the world that it is God's will that all of God's children, including Muslims and Christians, are created to live in peace and justice with one another.