



World Council of Churches

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HRH Prince Ghazi bin
Muhammad bin Talal
The Royal Palace
Amman
Jordan

Geneva, 18 March 2008

Your Royal Highness, Eminent signatories of *A Common Word Between Us and You*,

Greetings in the name of the One God, whom we love and who loves us.

I received your letter to Christian leaders, *A Common Word*, with great joy and hope. I read it as a representative expression of the Muslim will to engage with the Christian community in dialogue for the sake of justice and world peace. I recognize and welcome the serious intent of *A Common Word* and your invitation to explore our shared concerns and visions for our common humanity.

The member churches of the World Council of Churches have for several decades been engaged in relationships with people of other faiths, especially with Muslims. The outcomes of the joint work include *Striving Together in Dialogue: A Muslim-Christian Call to Reflection and Action* (2001), which notes

While it is true that the complex history of Christian-Muslim relations has known much rivalry and war, it is often forgotten that there were rich and fertile encounters in the realms of life and ideas alike. Unfortunately, one of the features of our historical memories has been the way in which conflicts overshadow peaceful experiences and accusations drown the voices of understanding. Something similar happens at the level of religious views, when perceptions of difference displace common or shared principles.

The WCC welcomes the initiative and opportunity *A Common Word* represents, and will encourage our member churches and ecumenical partners to engage constructively and positively with their Muslim neighbours in the various local situations throughout the world, and in the light of your letter we confidently look forward to you and your colleagues to reciprocate. *Striving Together* confirms that

Relations between Muslims and Christians are usually strongly influenced by local and regional histories and events. But broader developments also have a significant impact, especially when they contribute to destabilising societies previously characterised by peaceful relations of mutual acceptance. In situations where uncertainties of change begin to be felt, suspicion and fear can build up between communities leading to tension and possibly conflict.

Since my letter to you of 6 December 2007, we have commenced consultations with member churches and ecumenical partners, a number of whom responded with great enthusiasm. In the spirit of your invitation to a shared endeavour, I called a meeting of scholars engaged in the field of Christian-Muslim relations, representing member churches and wider ecumenical circles. Their deliberations produced a document entitled *Learning to Explore Love Together*, which I have sent to the member churches. This document is intended to encourage the churches to read and reflect on your Letter and engage constructively with their Muslim neighbours in exploring common concerns.

I have also offered the World Council of Churches' good offices to support our member churches' engagement with their Muslim neighbours. Specifically, I have asked our Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation programme staff to make a response to your initiative a top priority.

I want to take this opportunity to initiate a conversation with you about face-to-face dialogue events between you, the authors of *A Common Word*, and your Christian counterparts in order to expand and deepen the understanding between us of loving God and loving neighbour.

As a first step in preparing for such dialogue events, I would like to suggest that we together create a joint Muslim-Christian working group that will produce the plans, create the agendas and issue invitations.

I have instructed my programme staff in Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation to be in contact with your staff to explore further how a constructive cooperation might take shape so that we may move into the next phase of our relationship based on shared principles and a shared agenda.

Given the tremendous opportunity *A Common Word* presents, let me offer to send a delegation to Amman later this spring, perhaps in April or May, to meet with you to discuss further how a constructive cooperation might take shape so that we may move into the next phase of our relationship based on shared principles and a shared agenda.

I look forward to your response, and to the possibility of meeting face-to-face in the near future.

With my sincere wishes for peace,



Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia
General Secretary