

Final Declaration of the Yale Common Word Conference, July 2008

A Common Word – an open letter addressed by Muslim leaders to Christian leaders – began with a desire by Muslim leaders to follow the Qur’anic commandment to speak to Christians and Jews, *Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to a common word between us and you: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him.* (3:64) The intention behind *A Common Word* is not to foist the theology of one religion upon another or to attempt conversion. Neither does it seek to reduce both our religions to an artificial union based upon the Two Commandments.

Nevertheless, in *A Common Word*, Muslims recognized that Islam and Christianity do share an essential common ground: the love of God and love of the neighbor described in the Two Greatest Commandments of the Gospel, rooted in the Torah ‘*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,*’ and, ‘*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*’ The response of over 500 Christian leaders initiated by Yale University reaffirmed that this common ground is real and is a basis for dialogue between our two religions.

A Common Word is rooted in our sacred texts, arising from within, not imposed from without. Love of God and love of the neighbor are part of our common Abrahamic heritage. Based upon this principle, ours is an effort to ensure that religions heal rather than wound, nourish the human soul rather than poison human relations. These Two Commandments teach us both what we must demand of ourselves and what we should expect from the other in what we *do*, what we *say*, and what we *are*.

Participants in the conference discussed a range of theological and practical issues in an open manner characterized by honesty and good will. The theological issues discussed included different understandings of the Unity of God, of Jesus Christ and his passion, and of the love of God. The practical issues included world poverty, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the situation in Palestine and Israel, the dangers of further wars, and the freedom of religion.

Participants of the conference agreed that:

1. Muslims and Christians affirm the unity and absoluteness of God. We recognize that God’s merciful love is infinite, eternal and embraces all things. This love is central to both our religions and is at the heart of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic monotheistic heritage.
2. We recognize that all human beings have the right to the preservation of life, religion, property, intellect, and dignity. No Muslim or Christian should deny the other these rights, nor should they tolerate the denigration or desecration of one another’s sacred symbols, founding figures, or places of worship.
3. We are committed to these principles and to furthering them through continuous dialogue. We thank God for bringing us together in this historic endeavor and ask that He purify our intentions and grant us success through His all-encompassing Mercy and Love.