

The Anglican Communion – Al-Azhar Al-Sherif Interfaith Dialogue *2015 Communique*

The dialogue committee composed of a delegation from the Anglican Communion and from Al-Azhar Al-Sherif held its 12th Annual meeting in Cairo on Wednesday the 9th December 2015AD corresponding to 26 Safar 1437AH. This meeting was held in accordance with the agreement signed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Al-Sherif on 30 January 2002 at Lambeth Palace, London.

His Eminence Dr. Ahmed el Tayyib, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Al-Sherif, welcomed the dialogue committee in his office. This meeting took place in the context of the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to Al-Azhar Al-Sherif in April 2015 and the visit of the Grand Imam to Lambeth Palace in June 2015.

As part of the Joint Committee's review of its work over the past thirteen years since the dialogue agreement was signed, it wishes to restate the goals expressed in the original agreement. These goals are:

1. To encourage Anglicans to understand Islam and to encourage Muslims to understand the Christian faith.
2. To share together in solving problems and conflicts that happen sometimes between Muslims and Christians in different parts of the world, and to encourage religious leaders to use their influence for the purpose of reconciliation and peace making.
3. To work together against injustice and the abuse of human rights among different nationalities and to spread the good teaching of both Islam and Christianity.
4. To encourage institutions on both sides to play a positive role in development.

The two co-chairs, H.E. Dr. Hamdy Zakzouk and Archbishop Mouneer Hanna Anis, welcomed each other, reaffirming the importance of dialogue between Muslims and Christians throughout the world. The dialogue committee discussed three papers; "Using Religious Texts in Justifying Violence: An Analysis and Critique", "Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities", "The role of religious leaders in combating the use of violence and terrorism in the name of religion".

There was particular focus this year on the issue of the scriptural understanding of how the use of violence is limited in our respective faith traditions. Whilst Muslims and Christians recognise that conflict is part of the human condition, we also recognise that our understanding of scripture compels us to work to bring an end to that conflict and to strive for reconciliation and restoration. We discussed the responsibility of all Christians and Muslims to respect the right of others to practice their faith freely. Both Muslims and Christians believe that God created human beings to live at peace with each other.

In our discussion we examined situations in our world where these understandings are not currently shared. We expressed our sadness about the difficult situation which faces the followers of our two religions in many countries of the world.

The committee agreed to the following:

- Terrorism is an aggressive ideology that must be combatted with sound teaching.
- Terrorism in many of its forms is the outcome of the misuse of religious texts, often taken out of context.
- It is important to work together in combatting terrorism to prevent its spread.
- It is important to combat the social marginalisation of ethnic and religious minorities throughout the world, and discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or religion.
- The committee affirmed the importance of holding frequent interfaith dialogue sessions.
- The committee commends the conference organized by Al-Azhar Al-Sherif to respond to extreme ideologies and false and mistaken fatwas and affirms the role of Al-Azhar Al-Sherif in propagating tolerant and moderate teachings of Islam.
- The committee appreciated the role played by the Anglican Communion in combating Islamophobia in the United Kingdom and throughout the world.
- The committee denounced the recent terrorist attacks in Beirut, Paris, and Mali. It also affirmed the importance of joining the efforts of the international community in its determination to combat terrorism and in depleting the financial and military resources of terrorists.
- The committee committed to attend the final meeting of the Imams and Priests who participated in “Together for Egypt”. This project involved 200 Imams and Priests and was done under the auspices of the Egyptian House of the Family, “Beit el-Aila”, and sponsored by the Episcopal/Anglican Church in Egypt.
- The members of the dialogue committee agreed to communicate throughout the year and to encourage dialogue at both the level of the religious leaders and the grass-roots level.
- The members of the dialogue committee agreed to meet in Autumn 2016 in the UK.

Signed:

The Most Revd. Dr. Mouneer Hanna Anis

Archbishop of Egypt with
North Africa and the Horn of Africa
Primate of Jerusalem and the Middle East

H.E. Dr. Mohammed Hamdy Zakzouk

Chair of Al-Azhar Committee for Interfaith Dialogue

The Right Revd. Dr. Toby Howarth
Bishop of Bradford, UK

The Right Revd. Dr. Jonathan Frost
Bishop of Southampton, UK

The Rev. Mark Poulson
Secretary for Inter Religious Affairs to Abp. of Canterbury
National Inter Religious Advisor for Church of England

Ambassador Abdul Rahman Moussa
Consultant of the Grand Imam for Dialogue

Dr. Ibrahim Al-Hudhud
Vice President of the University of Al-Azhar

Dr. Mohey Eldin Afifi
Secretary General of the Islamic Research Academy at Al-Azhar Al-Sherif

Dr. Kamal Boraiqa Abdelsalam Hasan
Member of the Interfaith Dialogue Committee at Al-Azhar Al-Sherif