



Presbyterian Mission
World Mission

Communities of Reconciliation

An Interfaith Small Group Journey to Encourage and Facilitate Understanding, Friendship, Peace and Reconciliation

Introduction

The “Communities of Reconciliation” small group experience outlined in this guide intends to bring Christians and Muslims together for a period of time to break down walls, create a culture for friendship and dialogue, and build bridges of peace, reconciliation and service to the community at large.

Communities of Reconciliation is designed as a guide. We encourage leaders of small groups — including at least one Muslim and one Christian — to take it as a template with exercises and steps that can be fine-tuned to the group itself, before or after the group begins. Leaders can work together to amend the outline as the Spirit of God guides them, shaping the content and timeline.

The goal is to assemble a group of five to 10 Christians and five to 10 Muslims (total of 10–20) who agree to meet together over a period of 24 sessions, twice a month or weekly for 12–24 months. We are looking for both younger and older adults to participate. Our intention is for these groups to be co-led by both faith communities under approval by the leadership. The groups will meet for four three-month periods, with each period ending with a dialogue dinner to discuss each faith community’s learning



experiences and the spiritual impact of the journey for that quarterly period. There will be a book recommended for the interfaith small groups to read as a supplement for each quarter. These books will come from an agreed upon list from both the Muslim and Christian communities.

Once the group is set, it will be a closed group until the journey is completed.

Adding participants later in the process would be counterproductive, as each gathering will build on the other. Group participation of those committed is crucial, but we understand that not everyone will be able to make it to each meeting. Still, commitment on the front end is critical.

We will meet on the premise that there is misunderstanding and distrust in both faiths about the other. Can we come together to learn about the other in an environment that is safe in order to build genuine friendships? Our intention is not to debate or engage in polemics, nor is it to proselytize. Such actions lead to further distrust and conflict among Muslims and Christians. It is our hope as believers in one God and in God’s messengers that we can seek the straight path together. When we seek God together in an atmosphere of love, safety and respect, then we are all changed by the presence and Spirit of God.



Mission Toolkit: Christian-Muslim Relations



Use the right column of each page to write down thoughts and observations to share in your discussions.



THIRD PERIOD

Meetings 13–16 — Islam 101 includes at least once participating in the evening prayer. The last session is for questions and answers, though this will go on throughout the presentation. Key here is to stay on target — again, not for adherents of the other faith to argue but to hear about Islam from a Muslim, whether Christian attendees agree or not.

Meetings 17–20 — Christianity 101 (same format as Islam 101)

Now we will move into the action phase of our gatherings. At this point, we hope the Christians and the Muslims will have had a paradigm shift. Neither side should see the other as the “enemy” but as fellow human beings struggling to relate to God (Allah). We will now come up with a list of what we have in common as well as the list of what makes us distinct (again here we see it is the main theological issues but these come as no surprise to the other, e.g., Jesus, the Quran, etc.).

The next round of meetings will be back in a home, and together we will come up with action items:

Session 21 — What will we tell our friends we have learned, and how will we do this?

Session 22 — What ways can we serve the community together?

Session 23 — How can we continue our friendships and bring others into our fellowship?

Session 24 — Tell each other what our new friendships mean to us. End in prayer.

*Dialogue Dinner



After the completion of 24 sessions:

1. Do at least one community service project.
2. Get together for at least one social event.
3. To nurture natural friendships that have formed, encourage participants to call, email and plan time together.
4. Read and study holy books together in the natural friendships that have been formed.

Notes

