

INTERFAITH INSIGHTS

Sharing 'Muscat Manifesto' for a Michigan audience

Note: This column is coordinated by Douglas Kindschi, director of the Kaufman Interfaith Institute at Grand Valley State University.

By Douglas Kindschi

Last week, I wrote about my visit to the Al Amana Centre in Oman and mentioned how I learned about the center from David Ford, of Cambridge University. Ford has shared his wisdom about interfaith relations in Oman and soon will do so in West Michigan. I hope his listeners here will learn from and act upon his insights.



Kindschi

When Ford was invited to lecture at the Grand Mosque in Muscat, the capital of Oman, his talk was titled "A Muscat Manifesto." He began with quotes from Proverbs in the Hebrew Bible: "Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice. ... For wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her."

His call for wisdom in this time of suspicion, confronta-

tion and conflict begins with searching deeply in our scriptures and traditions. But along with this is the willingness to learn from other faith traditions. Then, together, we must work for the common good of the world. The result can be more wisdom, compassion and peace.

I am especially honored Ford included Grand Rapids on his current U.S. tour. He is the regius professor of divinity at Cambridge University and the founder and director of the Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme. Ford is a leading figure in the interfaith world and is author of more

than 10 books, including "The Future of Christian Theology," "Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love," and "Shaping Theology: Engagements in a Religious and Secular World." He has lectured throughout the world on interfaith themes and is one of the founders of Scriptural Reasoning, a practice of reading scripture in small groups representing different faith traditions.

While in Muscat, he left his audience with a challenge, which I now propose as a goal for our efforts here in West Michigan.

Let us aim to:

■ Love God and each other and have compassion for all God's creation.

■ Go deeper into our own faith, into each other's and into commitment to the common good.

■ Seek wisdom through our own scripture, history and theology, through each other's and through engagement with the arts, sciences, philosophy and other sources of wisdom.

■ Beware of conforming to modernity and of rejecting it; seek to heal and transform it.

■ Form personal relationships, groups, networks and organizations dedicated to

interfaith conversation, collaboration and education at all levels, from international to local.

■ Encourage the best communicators, artists, writers and teachers to spread the message of love of God and neighbor, drawing on the richest sources.

■ Cultivate a long-term vision of a habitable world, created and sustained by God for the good of all.

■ Create signs of hope within and among our faiths.

■ Do all this for the sake of God and God's good purposes.

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