

INTERFAITH INSIGHT

Bridging between science and religion through interfaith

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There are lots of ways to “do” interfaith. The most common way is to talk about (and listen to) one another speak of each other’s faith — you might hear talk of Mohammed, Jesus, creation in the image of God, or the Torah.

Such talk can, and should, be deep so that we can learn to respect and appreciate one another amidst our differences.

Another way is to do service work together, side by side, on matters of mutual concern.

There you likely will see in one another a religiously motivated concern for the poor, the widow and the orphan, as well as a shared hope for a world that is better for all our children. As a result, you may come to realize beneath the surface differences,

we are very much alike.

Finally, perhaps a combination of the two above, religious



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believers may think and speak together about various topics upon which faith impinges.

As you think aloud together, you likely will find differences and similarities. And by pledging to one another to listen carefully and speak gently, you likely will find new ways to embrace one another’s differences and encourage similarities.

The Kaufman Interfaith Institute is embarked on a project of the latter sort with a Muslim-Christian project on science and religion, funded by the John Templeton Foundation.

Last June, Doug Kindschi and

I traveled to Turkey with four other Christian scholars to meet with a group of Muslim Turkish scholars to begin working together.

We had no agenda but one: to listen very carefully to each other. And so we did, for three days, on Scriptural reasoning, God and the Big Bang, the Quran and science and religion and psychology.

Through walking and talking together, working together, and taking our meals together, we gained mutual understanding and built a foundation of trust.

A wide variety of occasionally divisive and emotive views were presented and defended. Disagreements were greeted with firm, yet respectful, responses. Humor was used to defuse tense situations.

In the end, mutual respect trumped suspicion and indigna-

tion. We started as strangers with strange faith beliefs and ended up friends.

At a concluding session, we established Muslim-Christian working partnerships on shared research interests.

Those teams, who’ve been working across the Atlantic for nearly a year, will come together in June for a three-day workshop to share our research.

Hosted by Kalamazoo’s Fetzer Institute, we will gather at Fetzer’s lovely Seasons retreat center. We’ll sleep in the same cabins, eat at the same tables, walk down the same paths and then gather to present the results of our year-long cooperative labors.

While the topics of these faculty discussions primarily will be academic on science, philosophy and theology, we also will be crossing well-established bridges between two faiths,

cultures and nations.

Fortunately, everyone is invited to cross those bridges with us June 13 at the annual Grand Dialogue in Science and Religion.

Our guests from Turkey will be staying over to participate in this year’s event. Some of them, along with faculty from our partner colleges, universities and seminaries, will be presenting breakout sessions in the afternoon.

Our keynote speaker in the morning is Professor Caner Taslaman from Yildiz Technical University in Istanbul, whose topic is “Can a Muslim be a Darwinian?”

Registration is free, and an optional lunch (\$5) is available by going online at GrandDialogue.org or by calling 616-331-5702.

Join us as we build bridges between science and religion and also between faith traditions.

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