Religious and Belief Systems in Australia post-1945

Fr Brian Vale and Fr Patrick McInerney

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE
Outlines of Workshop

- Introduction
- Studies of Religion HSC Focus
- What is interreligious/interfaith dialogue?
- Attitudes needed for interfaith dialogue
- Why is interreligious dialogue necessary in Australia today?
- The Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations
- Examples of interreligious dialogue:
  - Lindt Café Siege, December 2014
  - Iftar meals
  - Faith Ecology Network (FEN) Multi-faith Prayer Vigil, August 2013
  - Abraham Conference, August 2015
  - Youth PoWR, September 2015
  - ....
- Resources for Interreligious Dialogue
- Conclusion
Pope Francis & Interreligious Dialogue
STUDIES OF RELIGION HSC

BOARD OF STUDIES
NEW SOUTH WALES
Religious traditions in Australia post-1945

Contemporary Aboriginal Spiritualities

Religious Expression in Australia 1945 to the present

- The religious landscape from 1945 to present in relation to:
  - changing patterns of religious adherence
  - the current religious landscape

- Religious dialogue in multi-faith Australia
  - Ecumenical movements within Christianity
  - Interfaith dialogue
  - The relationship between Aboriginal spiritualities and religious traditions in the process of reconciliation.
EVALUATE THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE IN MULTI-FaITH AUSTRALIA
EVALUATE

MAKE A JUDGEMENT BASED ON CRITERIA;
DETERMINE THE VALUE OF
Explain the role of the ecumenical movement and/or interfaith dialogue as religious responses to secularism. Include examples in your answer.
YOU NEED EXAMPLES!
What is Interreligious Dialogue?
Dialogue is not ....

- **Debate**
  - Winners & losers
  - Superior/inferior

- **Seeking converts**
  - Win over the other
  - Respect freedom

- **Comparative studies in religion**
  - “head trip”
  - Encounter between persons
Ecumenism

Ecumenism refers to the movement towards religious unity amongst Christian denominations e.g. Catholic, Anglican, Uniting, Pentecostal ....

Interfaith dialogue is a process that seeks to achieve respect and mutual understanding and cooperation between people of different religions e.g. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Baha’i, Sikhism ....
Interreligious dialogue is a meeting of people of differing religions, in an atmosphere of freedom and openness, in order to listen to the other, to try to understand that person’s religion, and hopefully to seek possibilities of collaboration. It is hoped that the other partner will reciprocate, because dialogue should be marked by a two-way and not a one-way movement. Reciprocity is in the nature of dialogue. There is give and take. Dialogue implies both receptivity and active communication.

Four Kinds of Interfaith Dialogue

1. The dialogue of life
2. The dialogue of action
3. The dialogue of theological discourse
4. The dialogue of religious experience
Attitudes needed for Interreligious Dialogue
“Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on another’s dream. More serious still, we may forget ... that God was there before our arrival.”

Max Warren
Attitudes for interfaith dialogue

- “The purpose of dialogue is to come to an understanding of the other, not to determine whether they are good, bad, right or wrong.” (Kay Lindahl, *Nine Guidelines for Listening to Others*).

- “Before speaking, we must take great care to listen not only to what people say, but more especially to what they have it in their hearts to say. Only then will we understand them and respect them…” (Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*).

- “The fundamental attitudes that need to be found for dialogue are respect, openness, listening, humility and the common search for truth.” (Larry Nemer SVD, *Prophetic Dialogue: A New Way of Doing Mission*).
Nine Guidelines for Listening in IRD

1. When you are listening, **suspend assumptions**. We often assume that others have had the same experiences that we have, and that is how we listen to them. Learn to recognize assumptions by noticing when you get upset or annoyed by something someone else is saying.

2. When you are speaking, **express your personal response** – informed by your tradition, beliefs and practices as you have interpreted them in your life. Use “I” language. Take ownership of what you say. Notice how often the phrases “We all”, “of course”, “everyone says”, “you know” come into your conversation. The only person you can truly speak for is yourself.

3. **Listen and speak without judgment** – the purpose of dialogue is to come to an understanding of the other, not to determine whether they are good, bad, right or wrong.

*THE SACRED ART OF LISTENING:*
*Forty Reflections for Cultivating a Spiritual Practice* by Kay Lindahl
Nine Guidelines for Listening in IRD

4. **Suspend status** – everyone is an equal partner in the inquiry. There is no seniority or hierarchy. All are colleagues with a mutual quest for insight and clarity. You are each an expert in your life. That is what you bring to the dialogue process.

5. **Honour confidentiality** – leave the names of participants in the room so if you share stories or ideas, no one’s identity will be revealed. Create a safe space for self-expression.

6. **Listen for understanding**, not to agree with or believe – you do not have to agree with or believe anything that is said. Your job is to listen for understanding.

*THE SACRED ART OF LISTENING:*
*Forty Reflections for Cultivating a Spiritual Practice* by Kay Lindahl
7. **Ask clarifying or open-ended questions** to assist your understanding and to explore assumptions.

8. **Honour silence and time for reflection** – notice what wants to be said rather than what you want to say.

9. **One person speaks at a time** – pay attention to the flow of the conversation. Notice what patterns emerge from the group. Make sure that each person has an opportunity to speak, while knowing that no one is required to speak.

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*THE SACRED ART OF LISTENING:*

*Forty Reflections for Cultivating a Spiritual Practice* by Kay Lindahl
Why is Interreligious Dialogue Necessary in Australia Today?
Australia’s religious, cultural and ethnic diversity is constantly increasing. Affiliation to non-Christian religions has dramatically increased in a short period of time.

1911 – 96% of Australians reported an affiliation with Christianity.  
2011 – 61% of Australians reported an affiliation with Christianity.
A multi-religious society with a secular form of government

Religious Affiliation 68.3%
No Religion 22.3%
No Answer 9.4%

Christian 61.1%
Buddhist 2.5%
Muslim 2.2%
Hindu 1.3%
Other Religions 1.2%

2013 Census, Australian Bureau of Statistics
Wars, terrorist attacks and religious conflicts contribute to fear and hatred towards members of certain religions. Australia’s Muslim community, for example, was subject to suspicion and persecution in the years following the September 11 terrorist attacks. During these years, incorrect statements about Islam were disseminated through the media and offensive stereotypes were perpetuated.

Interfaith dialogue provides a forum for these stereotypes to be broken down.
Interfaith dialogue is a necessary step towards peace within our communities as it fosters respect and mutual understanding.
The Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations
We promote better relations between Christians and Muslims through a number of activities:

- Organizing conferences and seminars to enable Christians and Muslims to meet each other and learn from one another.
- Attending Muslim events e.g. *iftar*, ‘*Eid*, conferences
- Attending and hosting Christian-Muslim and other interfaith/multi-faith events e.g. *Abraham Conference*
- Publishing *Bridges* – a quarterly newsletter with news and feature articles on interfaith dialogue.
- Providing speakers and conducting workshops on interfaith dialogue.
- Providing resources on Islam and interfaith dialogue.
- Publishing *The Golden Rule Poster*
- Teaching courses on Islam and Interreligious Dialogue

The Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations is one of three centres at the Columban Mission Institute in North Sydney.
Examples of Interreligious Dialogue
Lakemba  Martin Place
December 2014
Iftar Meals
FEN Multi-faith Prayer Vigil, August 2013
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4olBRoZG1po
ABRAHAM CONFERENCE 2016

HATE SPEECH AND VIOLENCE

Keynote Speaker - Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton, Chief Minister, The Great Synagogue
Plus panel comprising Muslim, Christian & Jewish representatives

Venue: Parramatta Mission Fellowship Hall
Uniting Church in Australia
119 Macquarie Street,
Parramatta NSW 2150

Date: Sunday, 21 August 2016

Time: 2.30pm - 6.00pm

Cost: $20 Adult
$10 Student/Pensioner

Register online bit.ly/abrahamconf2016 by Thursday 11 August
(payment can be made online or at the door)

Enquiries: abrahamconf2016@gmail.com

#AbrahamPanelSydney
Event: Abraham Conference
https://www.facebook.com/Youth.PoWR/

YOUTH PoWR
3 SEPTEMBER 2016

PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD’S RELIGIONS

TOWARDS A MORE COMPASSIONATE
AND JUST SOCIETY
In groups of three or four, devise a hypothetical interfaith event that brings together members of two or more religions.

- What would your interfaith event involve? A mini-bus tour of sacred religious sites? Time spent volunteering in a soup kitchen? A high tea?
- What would you hope to achieve through this event?
- What message would you want your guests to leave with?
Resources for Interreligious Dialogue
The Golden Rule

- It is not until we meet a follower of another religion and take the time to listen to their views that we realize that all religions are fundamentally good.

- The Qur’an, the Bible and the Torah, for example, all teach the importance of The Golden Rule, that is, treating others as you would like to be treated.

- When our knowledge of other religions is based only on what we see in the media, this is a sure path to fear and conflict within our own communities.

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
The Golden Rule Poster

- Ethic of reciprocity
- In the sacred texts of thirteen (13) different religions/spiritualities
- Shared/common value
- Authoritative

https://goo.gl/oZSOza
Nostra Aetate – 50th Anniversary

- Australian Catholic Bishops Conference
  - Introduction
  - History
  - Summary
  - Definition
  - Implementation
  - Teaching Documents
  - Our Responsibility
  - What we do
  - What you can do
  - Conclusion

goo.gl/dBWWoT
Editorial

In the past month Nadeem Hussain baked the Queen's 90th birthday cake. Moka Bouattia was elected president of the National Union of Students (NUS). Ryad Mair was named the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) Men's Players' Player of the Year. Salma Khan was elected Mayor of London. Walied Aly won the Gold Lodge and Susana Jamalidinova won Eurovision. These winners all happened to be Muslim, so there has been joyful celebration among Muslims.

Such celebration is good and appropriate. It is acknowledging genuine achievement, a Muslim being rightly honoured in a society that wrongly is often Islamophobic. But this celebration can have a shadow side. It can be an “us” against an “them”. It can all too easily slip into a form of religious tribalism, of segregated identity rather than integrated belonging, of an invented Muslim identity, especially when baking a cake, leading a student organisation, kicking a football, heading a council, being a popular TV personality or singing well has nothing to do with being a Muslim as such!

I am reminded of Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on 11 August 1947: “You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the State.” It is the tragedy of Pakistan that the founder’s wise words have not been heeded and religion has become the business of the State with divisive consequences for all Pakistanis, especially the minority communities. If we allow baking, union activity, sport, government, television and entertainment to be segregated on the basis of religion, we are sowing division in our multicultural, multi-religious society and will reap conflict and violence.

It’s Easy to Hate

It is easy to hate. They want us to hate. But the terrorist have lost. You know how I know?

Because right now thousands of Lahore men and women are queuing up outside hospitals to donate blood. Tonight, Muslim blood will flow through Christian bodies. And vice versa. You see, in hurting us, you united us. Thank you.

#LahoreStrong

This text was posted on Facebook on 28 March - the day after the eastern bombing in Lahore. It has since been shared over thousands of times and shared 4,485 times. Arsalanding death for violence and terrorism does not work for peace, dialogue and Christian-Muslim relationships.

Image: Church Mission Society Facebook Page

In his Gold Lodge acceptance speech Walied Aly told of an Australian actor named Mustafa who used an alias because he could not get a job in the industry using his real name. This powerful story exposes the prejudice, racism and Islamophobia of mainstream society, which generates the counter assertion of a false, segregated Muslim identity in cooking, sport, television and politics (whereas authentic Muslim identity is found in following Islamic teaching and observing the Five Pillars). The result is a society divided into “us” and “them”.

continued on Page 7
The workshop is ended!!
Go in peace ... and dialogue with believers from other religions and none, creating a united, just, peaceful, respectful, harmonious and cooperative society!!!
References


- Pope Paul VI. *Ecclesiam Suam*: Paths of the Church. 6 August 1964.
