

A TIME TO GATHER



The African Interfaith Conference

8th-13th of October 2008 Cairo, Egypt



The Episcopal/Anglican Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa

with

Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA)

Introduction

by Bishop Mouneer Hanna Anis

It is beyond a shadow of doubt that within the last twenty years, extremism, fanaticism and polarization have been on the rise, even while Interfaith Dialogue is taking place and is also on the rise; at the same time, when people who are involved at Interfaith Dialogue for accepting the other, listening to the other, and tolerance we see that insulting the other and depraving the other of human rights is also on the increase. This paradox leads us to the following questions:

- Is there any value in Interfaith Dialogue?
- Should we come up with a more active agenda for Interfaith Dialogue?
- How can we encourage the importance of Interfaith Dialogue to the people at the street level?
- How can we actively move in daily dialogue?
- How does Interfaith Dialogue become more influential on our people?

All these questions go around in our minds today. This is why we have come here: to find answers to these questions, to evaluate ourselves with transparency, and to find together a way in which we can walk in the coming years.

Thank you,

+Mouneer Egypt

The Most Rev.Dr, Mouneer Hanna Anis

Bishop The Episcopal/Anglican Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa
President Bishop of the Episcopal/Anglican Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

A TIME TO GATHER

The African Interfaith Conference

Cairo, Egypt

The Episcopal/Anglican Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa

with

Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA)

The Diocese of Egypt together with PROCMURA convened the African Interfaith Conference from 8th-13th October 2008. Danmission also partnered in this conference.

The objective of the conference was to affirm and promote the global values of Dialogue, especially in Africa which is in need of stability, security, and development. Representatives from Sub-Saharan African countries (Ghana, Kenya, mainland Tanzania, Zanzibar and Togo), North African countries (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia) as well as Western countries (England, Denmark, Italy and the United States) participated in the conference.

*By virtue of meeting in Egypt, the representatives were immediately made aware of the fact that Christians and Muslims have co-existed in Egypt for about fourteen centuries. Dialogue is not new, but needs to be renewed. The opening session was attended by prominent Christian and Muslim religious leaders, as well as diplomats and leaders from the civil society.**

The participants issued the following communiqué:

We are brought together by a strong conviction of the importance of building bridges of understanding and stand united in our commitment to Interfaith Dialogue. This work is vital at a time when nations suffer so much from local, regional and international conflicts.

We are united in our view that there is no option other than dialogue which is itself the language of God. Humanity has suffered greatly as a result of wars, ethnic, political and religious conflicts. Much of this strife arose from the conscious promotion of conflict between nations, cultures, religions and civilizations rather than Dialogue*

**Among these leaders were: The Grand Mufti of Egypt Dr. Ali Gomma, The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs Dr. Salem, Bishop Johanna Kolta of the Coptic Catholic Church, Rev. Dr. Andrea Zaky, the Vice-President of the Association of the Evangelical Churches in Egypt, Sheikh Fawzy the former Deputy of the Grand Imam of Al Azhar, Professor Abdel Ati Mohammed Abdel Galil representing the World Islamic Call Society in Libya, Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, the Papal Nuncio of the Roman Catholic Church, Rev. Harald Nielsen, the Regional Director of Danmission, Diplomats from the Tunisian, Algerian and Libyan Embassies, and other representatives.*

Special greetings were received from the Nigerian delegation who were unexpectedly delayed and not able to participate in person.

There have been many Interfaith Dialogues in the past few decades, of which too many were confined to the level of religious leaders. These Dialogues did not always achieve the desired impact because of this restriction. We recommend that Dialogue move from the summit to the base; from the level of religious leaders to the popular level of the street.

In the light of these considerations, we affirm:

1. The importance of constructive dialogue which promotes the values of peace, co-existence between all peoples, without any discrimination.
2. The role and involvement of women in such Interfaith Dialogues.

3. The importance of promoting a culture of dialogue among young generations.

4. The need for Christians and Muslims to work together on issues of practical social concern, including: community development, the challenges of poverty, HIV/AIDS, malaria and illiteracy.

5. The importance of correcting misconceptions in the minds of Christians and Muslims.

We are confident that such practical steps will have a most positive impact on the relationship between Christians and Muslims and that they can achieve this across all levels of society.

We also wish to note that it is often misconceptions introduced from outside our communities by those who promote religious extremism that disturbs and disrupts our historically evident capacity for peaceful co-existence. It is building upon our longstanding togetherness in the face of shared challenges that will benefit us all.

The participants express their gratitude to those who organized and supported the conference and we commit ourselves strongly to sustaining our programme of future work in this critical arena of our time.

The participants are grateful for the support of our respective governments and especially the Egyptian Government for its assistance.

On behalf of the Participants:

Rev. Dr. Johnson Apenad Mbillah

Sheikh Fawzy Zefzef

Sheikh Soraga Fadhil Suleiman

President Bishop Dr. Mouneer Anis

Summary of presentations

Prof. Abdel Ati Mohammed Abdel Galil, World Islamic Call Society, Libya

Dialogue needs to go from the level of the intellectuals to the level of the street. It is needed to develop a culture of dialogue, and to do this we need to train our kids in the dialogical way of thinking. This is not only something we realize as humans, but it is the way of God: God dialogued with Adam, the angels – even the devil. All creatures should be in dialogue, and this is the global goal of Islam.

The World Islamic Call Society is an NGO with the main goal of knowing the other: To offer Islam to the other, as the other is not opposed to us. The earth is one, and we are all one in it. The society started in 1976 with a conference, and we have been criticized since, but we are convinced of the value of dialogue, and we have the purpose of dialogue. As the Prophet (PBUH) said, 'Don't fight, just speak and write.' And slowly, bit by bit, the doors are opening to us with the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestants etc.

After the conference, that was the beginning of the society and a string of conferences were held. We named one of them 'To be Known', where the participants explained the others the reality of their religion. To do dialogue is to get to know each other: 'What you are ignorant about, you fight.' These kinds of dialogue enable the participants to live together in peace, as each knows his place and how to interact peacefully. Apart from these conferences, we have also had dialogues with states, like Evangelicals from Tripoli-Michigan, Canada, and Russia – and we have had communication through TV channels to reach further out. But we also address the basic levels; like eating together in each others homes as one family. I celebrated once Christmas with a Spanish family.

The society is spreading the culture of dialogue through Africa, where most of our students are from – and they come with a rich cultural variety. I was once asked by one of them: 'What are the weapons of dialogue?', and I answered: 'There are no weapons – only tools.' We acknowledge the importance of the word, and how it creates understanding, and through this our more than 5000 students become examples for the world as local peacemakers.

The reason for terrorism is lack of dialogue.

Dr Rabiatu Ammah, Ghana

Ghana is a developing country with a secular constitution, which won its independence in 1957. A recent census estimated the Christians to be 69 % of the population, while Muslims were 15 %, 18 % traditional religions, and 6,9 % other as the Hindus. The census was protested among Muslims with claims of the Muslim population being 30-35 %, but they did not seem to have any empirical evidence for these claims.

The Muslim-Christian relations are in general cordial based on a common African identity, as both Christians and Muslims have integrated into the African culture. Many families consist of both Christians and Muslims, the informal interfaith dialogue is part of the every day life of the streets, and life is peaceful.

There are however also challenges, as tensions arise when e.g. Charismatic churches ventures into Muslim areas to evangelize, while some Arab-educated Muslims import extremist point of views, though the latter more often tend to develop intra-religious conflicts, than issues between Christians and Muslims. But inter-religious conflicts do arise, as when a Muslim student was killed, because it was believed that he was forced to attend church. In these conflicts the women are especially vulnerable, so they tend to suffer the most.

We have various institutions to deal with the religious issues, like: Forum of Religious Bodies, Council of Churches of Ghana, which includes Pentecostals, the Chief Imam, Catholics etc. There is also the Peace Council of Ghana, the Ghana Conference of Religions for Peace, the AIDS committee, and the Institute for Religion and Culture

The interference from outside is damaging, as it moves people from being Tiyaniiyah (a traditional Sufi order) to becoming Ansar-i-Sunna (Islamists), who have a tendency to primarily condemn those, who are different. E.g. celebrating Maulid (the birthday of the Prophet) is considered Bida (innovation). The Evangelical churches also bring in outside influences, which stirs up things, but the main line churches do not do crusades, as they do.

There has been a change of attitude, which shows itself in different ways. The veil used to be for married women only, but now even small kids are seen wearing it, and an unveiled woman is seen as a bad Muslim. In Christian / Muslim marriages the kids often turn out Muslim, but they sometimes do chose to become Christian. It also happens that Muslim women marry Christian men. In these mixed marriages it is very important to know, what it means to enter into it, as it often creates problems. Sometimes marriages results in one of the spouses converting.

Rev. Harald Nielsen, Denmark

Denmark is a kingdom, but became a democracy in 1849, and now has a liberal / conservative government, which has been in power since 2001. The population counts 5,5 million people with 1,5 million living in the capital, Copenhagen. Denmark has a long Christian tradition stretching back to the year 826, where it became Christian. The denomination was Roman Catholic until the reformation in 1536, where it became Lutheran. In 2008 83 % of the population is members of the Danish Lutheran Folk Church, which is stated as the religion of the state in the constitution being supported by the state. There is freedom of religion, thinking, gathering, and expression.

Since 1965 the Muslim population has grown from practically not existing to around 225.000. Among these there are 5.000 Danish born converts to Islam. The Muslim population is divided along ethnic, national, and linguistic lines. There has not yet been build a mosque for the reason of worship, but there more than 100 mosques in buildings adapted into the purpose. Many of the Imams, who preach in these mosques are imported specifically for this purpose, and often have little if any knowledge of the Danish society and culture. Denmark faces integration problems:

Many of the 2nd generation immigrant are angry, 80 % of the imprisoned young people are from immigrant families, many parents become conservative. The aggressive Hizb-ut-Tahrir are few, but very visible in the media, and this scares big parts of the non-Muslim population. This swells the ranks of votes for the Danish Folk Party, who has a quite aggressive stance against immigrants, and has accumulated 15 % of the parliamentary basis for the government.

A problem for the Muslim / Christian dialogue in Denmark is the diversity within the Muslim population. There is a National Association of Muslims, but they cannot claim to be representative, which leaves Denmark without any official dialogue.

1998-2000: A committee settled by the bishops worked to solve this issue resulting in the NGO, Folk Church and Religious Encounter. Other organisations working with dialogue are Danmission, the Islamic-Christian Study Centre, and the Cross-Cultural Centre. Apart from this the engagement in dialogue is growing on the personal level between people and in local congregations.

The cartoon crisis started with the printing of the 12 drawings of the Prophet in Jyllandsposten on September 30th 2005. Jyllandsposten had asked drawers to draw the cartoons after a school book editor failed to find drawers willing to draw the Prophet out of fear of aggressive Muslims.

In January / February 2006 the Danish embassy in Damascus and later Beirut were torched and the prime minister took over the case from the foreign minister. He had refused to meet 16 ambassadors, who asked to discuss the case in Denmark and now he had to face the consequences. On February 4th Danmission was summoned by the Foreign Ministry and asked for advice. The result, after advice from partners in Egypt, was to send a church delegation to Egypt, which helped calm the situation and was reported on all global TV stations.

Danmission has partnerships with Anglican church of North Africa, Procmura, CEOSS (Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services), ELCT (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania) Zanzibar, FCDC and Arab Group for CMR (Christian-Muslim Relations) in Lebanon.

Danmission is engaged in dialogue in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Zanzibar, and India, and in peace & reconciliation in Iraq & Afghanistan.

What people engaged in dialogue is facing is not a clash of civilizations, but a clash of ignorance.

Rev. Emil Burizk, Tunisia

I am moved, when I hear Muslims say: 'In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate.' From the 1st to the 13th century this was written on the cover of the Arab bible, before it was abandoned. The Eastern Christianity experienced wars with Islam and because of this we felt the need to belong to another group that could protect us. Therefore we invited in missionaries, but they did not even know our language, and was dismissive of our tradition. E.g. the Maronites came from Rome to reform us, and in the process they burnt all our scrolls.

We therefore have to go back to our roots and examine our past. We were forced to wonderful terms; a language we shared with Muslims. We don't have to invent anything, as we already have it in our history. Wars led to rejection, but in our hearts we want dialogue, which is part of our true

identity. 'Salaam aleikum', why shouldn't we say it, when Jesus greeted his disciples with those words? But we Christians do not say it anymore.

A civilization, which is sure of itself chooses, what is suitable and helpful, and lets go of what's not. We should not live on the level of reaction. It is time to be active, pro-active. If dialogue is the language of God there must be people who listen and translate that to their neighbor. God spoke to us with the best Word: Jesus. If nobody listens today, the books die. The law kills, but the spirit revives: Muslims and Christians must realize the responsibility, and that dialogue is not for intellectual purposes, but to transform the whole globe.

It is hard to listen to the voice of God, but those who listen to God are the only ones who can mediate God speaking to our world. A true believer is one who transfers the word of God into this world.

Tunisia is the doorway to civilization, which is forming Tunisia's personal and communal identity. It is flexible, open, rejecting fantasies. Tunisia does not accept terrorism.

Tunisia was originally inhabited by Berbers. In 800 BC the Phoenicians came from Lebanon and built Carthage. 400 BC Rome invaded. 700 AD the Arab Muslims arrived, and after a while all of Christianity vanished. The last traces are from the 14th century. Why did this happen? The language of the Bible was never Tunisian, as it was left in Latin. Christianity was for the elites whereas the masses remained ignorant. So if you want your religion to survive, you have to make it relevant to the whole population.

Tunisia gives no problem to its churches, as Tunisia is heading towards secularism. Only 2 % are non-Muslims. Due to its tolerant nature it is an example to be followed, as there is religious freedom, enabling some to convert to Christianity. They are usually tolerated, challenged "convince me". The government and state security fight the extremism. We discourage Muslim, who convert to Christianity from changing their culture or move out of their families. In this way, their daily lives are an expression of their faith. France were 80 years in Tunisia and they want to keep the legacy of tolerance left behind. Millions of Tunisians go to Europe, and they keep European influences when they return home. All in all Tunisia can be a pioneer in the Arab world.

Rev. Dr. Leonard Mtaita, Tanzania

Until the 1980's the word "peaceful co-existence" was not mentioned because people were already living together peacefully. From the mid-1980's new foreign teaching arrived to both Islam and Christianity. Multi-partyism started and some political leaders used religion for political purposes. Tanzania is known as an island of peace, but this is not the whole truth. In 1993 Muslims burnt 25 pork butcheries in Dar es-Salam after an episode where a Christian sold a Muslim pork.

In 2000 we started working with dialogue involving the religious leaders. 10 Muslims, 10 Catholics, 10 Protestants. At first we were pointing fingers, but then we decided together to denounce the ones insulting the other religion. We decided to go to the regional levels. The problem was that particular Muslim and Christian groups could not join. The people insulting were not at the meeting, those who only believe in conversion, not in dialogue. We talk together, but we also act and work with diapraxis through projects involving HIV/AIDS. We also had a football match between Muslims

and Christians. We focus on economic injustice, poverty reduction; we are together in these things. But there is a vocal extremist minority, so we still have work and challenges.

Sheikh Soraga, Zanzibar

Zanzibar was united with Tanganyika in 1964 and has 1 million inhabitants on the two islands of Pemba and Unguja. The Muslims make out 95-98 % of the population. The Mufti's office has been very active in Muslim-Christian dialogue. Our office was established by decree no 9, 2001, in the House of Representatives. There are extremists, who work against the Mufti's office, the main group calling itself Uamsho, Revival. They say the Mufti's office, being under the ministry of good governance, is a violation of the constitution. We summoned them to ask why. 'Because our government has no religion', they say. 'Well', we answer, 'why didn't you react long ago against the chief qadhi, WAKF and the Muslim Academy, which are also paid by the government?' This was what convinced us of the importance of dialogue.

In the early 1980's students came back from the Gulf states, destabilizing Zanzibar. Many of them were Islamic NGO's involving themselves in politics, and some of these dislike the cooperation between Muslims and Christians. Some Muslims don't accept our efforts, but this is due to their lack of knowledge. But I remind them of the story of the Christians who went inside a mosque to ask the Prophet for help to resolve internal issues.

Dialogue started long ago, but many of us Muslims are unaware of this. In Jerusalem Omar prayed outside the church so that the Muslims would not mistakenly think he had planned to confiscate it, which they might have thought if he had prayed inside it. He issued peace accords with Christians, but new Muslim scholars don't know this. I preach in Friday hotubas in mosques, TVs and radios, and very often I stress the importance of coexistence with Christians.

We have two big committees, one for HIV/AIDS and one for peace and stability in Zanzibar. This committee played a large role around the elections of 2005. We even included Pemba, and summoned all the political parties. Now we working to spread these committees into the villages. Dialogue has been brought to us, and we are carrying it out to all of our society. There are people, who try to stop us, but we press on. Now we are working on the constitution of the interfaith council of Tanzania.

Rev. Joyce, Kabuba Anglican church, Kenya

We have failed as religious leaders to guide our people. In the big debate in federalism religious leaders were openly disagreeing. Mihadhara, the open-air debate meetings, have become misused and become forums for attack. The mentality has been one without self-criticism: 'We are the best people.' The majority of the population are Christians, making out approximately 70-80 %.

One of the main issues is terrorism. The Al Qaeda bomb ten years ago distorted our relations. Procmura has done a great deal to bring together Muslims and Christians with a common issue between Muslims and Christians in poverty, which does not know religion, but cuts across. The

same goes for HIV/AIDS. Kibaki made one Friday a day of prayer for the whole nation, which was a good initiative. We want one united Kenya.

There are intermarriages, which creates tensions, as the woman often follows the man into his religion. The fight against FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) unites. There are issues of life, depending on communal agreement, that we move together. Another politically divisive issue was the entrenchment of qadi courts in the constitution. Many Christians opposed it. And also the Anti-terrorism Act, which lead to 6 Kenyan Muslims to be caught in Somalia. Worth mentioning is also the Fungamano initiative, where religious leaders were coming forward to advise politicians on national issues.

Bishop Mouneer Hanna Anis

The Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting the right of citizenship

Introduction

While the world today is more secular and more distant from God than any time before,

We find that religion still plays a role in many of the conflicts of our time. Examples of this are the conflict between North and South Sudan, between Palestine and Israel, Iraq, Lebanon, Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir and also terrorist attacks in London, India, New York and Northern Ireland.

The question that comes to mind now is how religion became a reason for conflict when it should provide a motive for people to live in love and peace? It is difficult to find a clear answer for this question, but I think that behind this phenomenon lie two reasons.

First, a misunderstanding of the message of religions that calls for a love of God and a love of others. This may lead to wrong behaviour. The external appearance of religion does not necessarily express a right understanding of the message of religions and is not a proof of right relationship with God.

Second, different communities are in continuous search for identity and a sense of belonging to what is unchanging, great, historical and pure. And because the religious identity is characterised by these qualities, it becomes very attractive for many, especially in the East. Religious affiliation gives an identity to such communities.

One of the causes of the conflicts mentioned earlier is the presence of minorities who do not have the same full rights of citizenship that the majority enjoy. In other words, there is an absence of social, political and economic justice. As a result of this, the minorities rise up from time to time, demanding such rights. This is what leads to conflicts and wars between minorities and governments that are controlled by majorities.

The war between the North and the South of Sudan is one of the clearer examples of this. The people in the South, where the majority are Christians, are deprived of educational, health and economic services while much of these services are available in the North where the majority of Muslims live. The result is a war that continued for more than 20 years where over two million were killed and four and a half million were displaced. The problem is being repeated today in Darfur.

A New Direction for Interfaith Dialogue

In such climate, interfaith dialogue become utterly important, as it has helped in understanding the other's views and appreciating their sufferings. I must confess that there were many facts which I was ignorant about before we started the dialogue, with Al-Azhar Al Sharif. Dialogue has helped me to understand Islam, and the joint work with my Muslim friends plus the exchange of visits between students from the University of Al-Azhar and those from theological schools has helped in more understanding and a closeness. This is due to the great efforts of NIFCON and the permanent committee of interfaith dialogue of Al-Azhar Al Sharif.

Today, and after five years of dialogue, between the Anglican Communion and Al-Azhar Al Sharif, I think that it is important that we should direct our dialogue in a new direction where we deal with some of the problems and conflicts in the West and the Islamic world. This in fact is the second goal of the interfaith agreement, *"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 peacemaking"*.

The most common reason for the problems that face our communities in the West and the East is the denial of the right of citizenship to minorities. This is why I felt that it is very important for us as religious leaders to discuss this subject and find out how we can promote the right of citizenship in our communities.

I was encouraged to think of this by the constitutional changes that were suggested by President Mubarak. These changes were accepted by the Egyptians via a referendum this year. I still remember the wise words of the President when he said, "The right of citizenship is not just a law but it is a daily practice".

But how can we move from an article in a constitution affirming the right of citizenship to a place where this article becomes a reality and an integral part of the daily practise. No doubt this will take time and can be done in stages. It also takes effort from politicians, media people and religious leaders.

The role of religious leaders comes at the top of these efforts to promote the right of citizenship. They need to convince their communities that the right of citizenship is a right affirmed by God. They need to prove this from the scriptures. They also need to deal, with boldness, with the conflicts that come as a result of denying the right of citizenship of minorities.

One of the most important supports for religious leaders lies in the scriptures of the Koran and the Bible. They can use them to convince the people. I would like to mention below a very few of these scriptures as examples. I would also want to mention two articles of the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Right of Citizenship in the Bible

The life of Christ and His teaching never differentiated between one citizen and another. He dealt in the same way with Samaritans, Canaanites, Gentiles and Jews. This was different from the tradition of the Jews at that time. He intentionally sat with the poor and the marginalised in the society where he lived, and this was criticised by priests and Pharisees. In addition to that he chose his disciples from among the simplest in the society. Jesus Christ said to his disciples, *"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* (Matthew 9:13). Jesus also taught his disciples to pray like this:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven". (Matthew 6:9-10). Here Jesus teaches his disciples and all those who believe in Him that we all pray to one God and Father in heaven. This means that we are brothers, sisters and children of this God. As a result, we have the same rights and the same duties if we believe in Him as Lord above all.

The right of citizenship involves both the rights of the citizen and the duties that he or she has to perform for the countries that they live in. Jesus affirms this in his saying, *"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."*

The book of Acts reminds us that the early Christians enjoyed economic and social equality regardless of their different backgrounds and races. *"There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need"*. (Acts 4:34-35) Apostles affirmed this so we Paul writing, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* (Galatians 3:28)

The Right of Citizenship in the Koran and the Hadith

The teaching of Islam affirms the right of citizenship. The clearest example is the saying of the Prophet about non-Muslims (Dhimmi) *“They should receive what we receive and have the same responsibility like us”*. This is in reference to non-Muslims. He also said, *“If anyone attacked a Dhimmi I would be against him until the end of the day.”* The holy Koran affirms the importance of justice, *“Allah commands justice, the doing of good,” Sorat El Nahl 90*. It also confirms the right to choose your religion *“Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things”*. Sorat el Bakarah 256

Prophet Mohammed prepared a document which he signed himself that regulates the relation between Muslims and Jews in Medina. They call it the Medina Constitution. It is considered as the first constitution of an Islamic State. In this document, we find the following.

1. Citizenship is based on belonging to the state;
2. Differences in religion do not give any follower of a certain religion favour over the follower of another religion;
3. All citizens in the state have the same rights and duties. Each citizen enjoys such rights as long as he or she does not betray the state;
4. If anyone co-operates with enemies and disregards this covenant, he or she would bring destruction and corruption to him or herself and his/her household.

We find similar covenants with the Christians, like the one with those in Nigran and the one between Kalif Omar Ibn El Khatab and the Bishop of Jerusalem. All these covenants affirm the right of citizenship and religious freedom. There are many other verses in both the Bible and the Koran that affirm the right of citizenship. Sadly, however, we have moved far away from these values, and have acted in opposite spirit. This is why we see racism between black and white in our communities with Christian majorities like South Africa and the United States. The slave trade was an extreme form of this racism. We also found the hatred between Protestant and Catholics as it happened in Northern Ireland. Today no Christian can visit Medina where Prophet Mohammed received the Christians of Nigran. Christians cannot worship in Medina as Prophet Mohammed allowed them, in the past, to pray in his own mosque. The freedom to build churches became prohibited in some Islamic countries and restricted in others. This denotes how distant we are today from the values of our forefathers in faith and how ignorant about the simplest principles of faith. This is why we need to return to these principles and to reaffirm and spread them, especially among the new generations who are exposed to contradictory interpretations and ideas among them calls for fanaticism and denial of the rights of others.

The Right of Citizenship in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

This declaration was signed by the members of the United Nations. It is a declaration that contains 30 articles and here I mention only the first two:

Article 1.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

The Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting the Right of Citizenship

No doubt the media has a great role in the enlightenment of people. It is very important to encourage media people to play their role in peace making and in achieving stability in society, especially at this time when some media sadly stir up the spirit of fanaticism and hatred. Whatever the position of the media is, however, the religious leaders have a great responsibility to affirm and promote the right of citizenship.

It is our duty to spare no effort in teaching our communities the right foundations that undergird the rights of citizenship. Our efforts should be characterized by continuity and persistence until we are able to enlighten society. This requires courage to face the criticism and aggression of those extremists who call for the denial of the rights of minorities.

Failure to carry out this responsibility will lead to a lot of conflicts and incidents that disturb the national unity and hinder the progress of society and distorts its image. Religious leaders need to encourage those who take policy decisions so that they can review all laws that contradict the rights of citizenship. Such national decision makers need public support for every decision they take. This support comes through right teaching from our Scriptures.

The Obstacles that Hinder Religious Leaders in Carrying out Their Role

- The reaction of those extremist groups that refuse and deny equality between people on account of their religious affiliation. Such reactions can reach the level of “takfeer”, proclaiming the society “godless”. It can even reach assault or murder as happened with the Nobel Prize winning writer Naguib Mahfouz and the journalist Farag Fouda. The question here is, should we allow such extreme groups to define our way and the order of our community? Should we let fear hinder us from speaking the truth just to avoid stirring these extremists?
- The reaction of the media, especially those that stir up the crowds by publishing statements out of context. I here would like to mention the news of the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to Al-Azhar Al Sharif in September 2004. It was written like this in some of the British newspapers: “The Archbishop of Canterbury Praises Muslims on 11th September”. The twisting here is giving the impression that the

reason of the visit on this particular day was to praise Muslims for what they did at the World Trade Centre in New York. The second manipulation is seen in the generalisation that charges all Muslims for committing this terrorist act. This press statement aimed to stir the anger of the British and people in the West, but the Archbishop of Canterbury did not postpone or cancel his visit, and it happened at the designated time and was very fruitful.

- The reaction of some colleagues who refuse changes in order to become relevant in the modern age. This is one of the difficult obstacles that has to be dealt with through internal dialogue. I remember here the attacks that I experienced myself of Christian leaders from a different denomination when I joined an Egyptian delegation, Christian and Muslim who visited Ireland in January 2005. I was accused of trying to improve the image of Islam in the West while many Christians are exposed to persecution. I did not care about this criticism because I was convinced of the importance of this visit.

Conclusion

No doubt what I have mentioned above highlights the importance of the role of religious leaders, Christians and Muslims, in promoting and affirming the right of citizenship as fundamental part of human rights, as affirmed by the God of all Creation. Failure to in carry out this role, will lead to more conflicts that waste our resources and energy, and hinder our progress and the prosperity of our people.

It is our duty then, to do what we believe in, whatever the cost. God has entrusted us with this responsibility, and we should be faithful to him. I would like to finish with this verse from Nehemiah 2:20, "The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding".

References

1. Non-Muslim Minorities in Islamic Countries - Sheik Fawzy Zefaf
2. Universal Declaration of Human Rights
3. The Interfaith Agreement between the Anglican Communion and Al-Azhar Al Sharif

The Most Rev. Dr. Mouneer H. Anis

President Bishop of Jerusalem & Middle East

Bishop of The Episcopal / Anglican Diocese of Egypt with N. Africa

And the Horn of Africa

Dr. Johnson A. Mbillah

A presentation of the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA)

TOPIC: The Complexity of Christian-Muslim Relations and the way forward to constructive relations between Christians and Muslims.

1. Introduction

Christians and Muslims have lived alongside each other for ages in different geo-political contexts and circumstances. In this living along each other, there has been harmonious relations, tensions and even violent conflicts.

The current situation we live in shows clearly that Christianity and Islam wield the largest following in the world today. We are always reminded that the two religions share more than one half of the world's population and that if adherents of the two religions cooperate and collaborate to work for peace and peaceful co-existence the world is likely to experience peace. Conversely, if Muslims and Christians get at each other's throats for whatever reason, and are perpetually in conflict the world will not have peace.¹

In this brief presentation, I shall be outlining the reality of Christian-Muslim relations drawn from PROCMURA's experience, make suggestions on what needs to be done based on what PROCMURA does, and provide practical information to our brothers and sisters from North Africa on PROCMURA's main occupation.

2. Gatherers and Scatterers in Christian-Muslim relations

From PROCMURA's experience there are at least two groups of people in Christianity and Islam as far as working towards peace and peaceful co-existence are concerned. The two groups are:

¹ For a detailed argument on this see www.acommonword.com

- a. Those who work towards the promotion of peace and peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims and by extension the wider society.
- b. Those who consciously and sometimes unconsciously work towards poisoning of relations between Christians and Muslims and by extension the wider society.

The first group is what PROCMURA refers to as those who **gather** and the second group, as those who **scatter**.

Since it is easier to scatter than to gather, those who scatter are often more noticed than those who gather.

In sub-Saharan Africa or Africa south of the Sahara where PROCMURA's work is concentrated, there is hardly any country that you cannot find Muslims and Christians living side by side. There are, for example, religiously mixed families where some are Christians, others Muslims and others adherents of African Traditional Religion (s) living peacefully.

PROCMURA works to ensure that the situation whereby Christians and Muslims live side by side in harmony, and promote cooperation and collaboration to attend to social issues becomes the norm and not the exception.²

In situations where Christians and Muslims have conflicts ranging from political, economic, social, cultural, religious etc issues, PROCMURA adopts measures to ensure that such conflicts are resolved in a none violent manner.³

In situations where there have been eruptions of violent confrontations between Christians and Muslims, PROCMURA takes measures to get the leadership of church and mosque to work together towards peace and reconciliation.⁴

² This is the general situation in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is more pronounced and obvious in some countries than others.

³ This situation exist in some countries in Eastern Africa such as Kenya when it came to a constitutional review, Tanzania as a result of irate and polemical debates (*mihadhara*) between Christians and Muslims, Ethiopia as a result of extremist tendencies, Uganda as a result of activities itinerant polemical and apologetic preachers and a one time problem of whether or not Christians are also permitted to be butchers or animals for public consumption. The above countries are only examples and not all that can be said in Sub-Saharan Africa in general.

⁴ This situation has come on time and again in large measure in the northern part of Nigeria and Sudan and in sporadic measures in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Malawi among others.

To maintain peace and mitigate conflicts between Christians and Muslims are no easy tasks since there are growing religious movements within Christianity and Islam that tend to caricature the other. These movements revisit historical stereotypes and manufacture modern ones to breed animosity between adherents of the two faiths. A number of them also prey on the Christian mandate to witness and evangelism (which PROCMURA takes seriously), and the Muslim mandate of *da'wa* (an invitation to none Muslims to come to the faith of Islam). These groups would rather see the two communities of Christians and Muslims have nothing to do with one another at the social level and remain in tension all the time. Their principal objective which are always to convert or otherwise reject the other and have nothing to do with them, is a disservice to one of the noble tasks of PROCMURA which is to encourage Christians and Muslims who choose to remain in their respective faiths in spite of Christian evangelism and Muslim *da'wah*, to live with their differences in peace and not in pieces.

In order to minimise and eventually eradicate stereotypes and promote peace and peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims there is a need for Christians to:

- Consciously embark on intra-Christian programmes aimed at helping Christian communities to educate their own on the importance of constructively relating with Muslims for the promotion of peace peaceful co-existence towards the holistic development of the human family
- Embark on education within the Christian Community on new and relevant methods of Christian witness in an interfaith environment of Christians and Muslims that respects the spirit of good neighbourliness

In a similar vein there is the need for the Muslim communities to:

- Consciously embark on intra-Muslim relations aimed at assisting Muslims to constructively relate with Christians for peace and peaceful co-existence with the same objective stated above
- Embark on intra-Muslim education to ensure that Muslim *da'wa* (invitation to none Muslims to become Muslims) is carried out in a manner that also respects the spirit of good neighbourliness.

These objectives in PROCMURA's perspective need to be carried out and propagated widely within the Christian and Muslim communities by Christians to their own and by Muslims to their own in spite of internal doctrinal or sectional differences.

The essence of intra-Christian programmes on constructively relating with Muslims which PROCMURA carries out is to prepare the ground for Christian constructive engagement with Muslims for peace in society, peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims, and collective efforts aimed at attending to social issues of mutual concern.

In order to effectively implement these, PPROCURA carries out joint Christian and Muslim workshops, seminars, teaching sessions and consultations targeting three main groups of people. These are:

- Christian and Muslim leaders
- Christian and Muslim women
- Christian and Muslim youth

In specific terms, subjects that are often carried out in such joint meetings include among others the following:

- Christians and Muslims together for peace in society and peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims
- Conflict management/Resolution
- Reconciliation
- Christian mission and Muslim *da'wah* that respect and not violate the spirit of good neighbourliness

Apart from the above, we also embark on social and health issues which include, among others:

- Education on prevention and management of the HIV/AIDS pandemic

- Education to stop Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Curbing Child trafficking
- Ecological issues and climate change (recently thought of)

Apart from our programme focus in Sub-Saharan Africa, PROCMURA also embarks on learning from different situations on how Christian and Muslim relations are carried out. North Africa and the Maghreb countries fall within the learning zone. As part of the process of learning, PROCMURA has in the past few years, through the support of the Danish Mission Council Development Department (DMCDD) and Danmission had exchange programmes with the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS), Cultural Development Division. The exchange programmes enabled Christians and Muslims from Egypt to visit PROCMURA in November 2005 and had a 5 day interchange learning experience of what PROCMURA does. A delegation of PROCMURA also visited Egypt in November 2006 to have first hand experience of what CEOSS does. The exchange programmes provided us with a wealth of experience on adherents of the two religions working on development and social issues together.

We have had opportunities to go with Muslim and Christian leaders from our constituencies in sub-Saharan Africa to the United States of America on different occasions to interact and state clearly the importance of Christians and Muslims working with each other in mutual respect and positive tolerance.

The Importance of Education

There is no doubt whatsoever that if Christians and Muslims need to constructively relate, there is a need for education through the print media and other sources. To this end, PROCMURA embarks on the production of education material and circulation of its periodic newsletter for all to recognise the importance of working together as people of faith.

It has also been possible through our cooperation with the All Africa Conference of Churches to send Christian and Muslim delegations to the G8 summit in Cologne, Germany in 2007. The objective of sending the delegation was to strongly indicate to the summit that religion is a partner in development.

There are many challenges which PROCMURA like any other organisation that embarks on Christian-Muslim relations face all the time. Some of the challenges we face include:

- Questions of how to encourage both Christians and Muslims to convince their own to embark on constructive relations with the other outside their own religion.
- How to work on religious extremism from both Christianity and Islam so as to enable adherents of the two religions to live in peace among themselves, and to extend that peace to the wider society.
- How to ensure that conflicts between Christians and Muslims for whatever reason are amicably resolved in a non violent manner.
- How to enable both Christians and Muslims to recognise and appreciate the importance of living with differences in peace.
- How to enable Christians and Muslims to value and appreciate the need for religious freedom and all that it entails.

CONCLUSION

We hope that this brief presentation at this conference has provided a gist of what PROCMURA is and stands for, what it does, and what challenges it encounters. It is our hope that as we engage one another in the next coming days and perhaps years to come, we will establish the much needed rapport for further engagements between Christians and Muslims of sub-Saharan Africa, and of Egypt and the rest of North Africa.

Rev. Harald Nielsen

Danmission

Function:

“The mission of Danmission is to make Jesus Christ known and believed, to the best of our ability. For this reason we share the Christian faith and attitude to life with others through Christian presence and preaching...”

Dialogue in a mission theological sense is a Christian obligation which is of importance for all the activities of the church. In Danmission dialogue is seen as a Christian condition of life, an expression of a basic Christian relationship to other people, which is reflected in all the tasks and initiatives of Danmission. Among the many ways one may define dialogue we choose to go in for the distinction of the Danish theologian and philosopher professor K. E. Løgstrup between conversation and talking together. Conversation is understood as an uncommitted chatter between people, where there is nothing at stake. One is just passing time. On the other hand talking together is understood as a situation where you expose yourself, “you are standing naked in front of the other person”, because “in talking together you want to have something to do with him”. In the talking together something is at stake between people. This is also the case with dialogue. In the dialogue we want to have something to do with the other person. We do not come anonymously, but we come as the persons we are and accept our identity. There is a purpose with all we are doing and that is being in dialogue - i.e. that we are all the time interacting with the people we are working among – and the dialogue work always includes Christian witness. This means that it is not only in the work which is done by the Dialogue Team that there is dialogue. We also find the inter religious dialogue for instance in the work of the Life and Growth of the Church team in evangelising, and in diapraxis and there will be overlapping with the Poverty Team. As a rule the dialogue work must always be done in co-operation with our partners, also in the situations where one of the dialogue consultants of Danmission plays an active role.

The purpose of the programme strategy is to clarify the objectives of the Dialogue Team, and the strategies the team has chosen to follow in order to reach its goals.

Introduction and background:

In the strategy plan for Danmission, *Danmission the next five years*” the vision for Danmission is formulated in the following way:

“Danmission works for a world in which people know the love of God, as reflected in Jesus Christ, and in which they can live in peace and have their daily needs met.”

Furthermore the mission of Danmission is for instance expressed in the following wording:

“Danmission aims to create conditions that will give hope to people and enhance love in the world. This is achieved by promoting dialogue and peaceful co-existence between

people of different faiths, and by fighting poverty in the Third World with focus on health work, development of local communities and training and education of children and young people.

The strategy plan divides the work into three categories, dialogue being one of them. In the light of the vision and mission of Danmission the Dialogue Team works to implement the strategy plan through the following:

1. Inter-religious dialogue
2. Intercultural dialogue
3. Peace and reconciliation work
4. Diapraxis

It is an important assumption of these four areas that they are not listed in order of priority, but are equal and integrated in one another. There is overlapping between the areas. They must be understood contextually in relation to our partners, who use different approaches to dialogue in their understanding of themselves.

So in the Dialogue Team we look at our task as participating in the vision of Danmission to work on helping people to know the love of God, and through dialogue, diapraxis and Christian presence to be available for Christian witnessing, and through peace and reconciliation work to help to fulfil the reconciliation which Christ brought through his incarnation.

This means that the team will focus on tasks within these four areas. In the future, weight will be attached to giving priority to more uniform projects, and there will be talks with the two other groups whether there are projects which belong more naturally to one of the other two teams.

It is the object in the work of the Dialogue Team that all projects should preferably be financed as well as governed locally. So the strategy is part of the capacity building of the local partners through helping them to educate local leaders to take control.

There is an old tradition for dialogue in the work of Danmission, going back to the end of the 19th century with famous missionaries as, for instance, L. P. Larsen in India, Alfred Nielsen in Syria, Kaj Baagøe in India and Jens Enevoldsen in Pakistan. Long before dialogue was mentioned in international mission, these missionaries practised dialogue in their way of working and they showed the way to dialogue.

It is the objective of the work of the Dialogue Team to build a bridge between the work abroad and in Denmark, so that the experience from the partner organisations may be

transferred to life in Denmark. In this way the connection is shown between the different working areas of Danmission, abroad as well as in Denmark.

The Dialogue Team tries deliberately to gather experience from our foreign partners and to inform them about the situation in Denmark, in the same way as we always try to confer Danish experience to the situation of our partners.

When we continue to the different working areas you will often see that the work is not done within only one of the categories mentioned above, but that the aim is to integrate the different categories into the work, just as it is the aim to integrate the work abroad and at home into as many projects as possible. This is shown in a series of projects where Danmission is instrumental to a meeting between Christians and Muslims from Denmark as well as one or more working areas.

We get the theological foundation of the work of the Dialogue Team from the biblical creation stories, which underline that “*God created man in his own image... male and female he created them*”. This means that all human beings on earth were created by God, and so we all belong to the same family and must live in mutual respect of one another. This is underlined by the stories in the New Testament about Jesus as God's incarnation in the world. God is present. The Trinity – God as Father, Son and the Holy Spirit – shows us, furthermore, that God contains in himself the diversity, as God comprises the divine as well as the human, united in the Spirit. This *theology of the presence* is a precondition of the idea of *Christian presence* as mission. So *Christian presence* is an important part of the way in which the Dialogue Team works.

The traditional mission strategy has worked for more than a hundred years according to the recipe that the rich Christians in the West have helped the poor Christians in the Middle East with schools, clinics, hospitals etc. - with Christian institutions on the whole. This has been of invaluable importance to the Middle East. Today we realise that the last decade's collections of capital investments in the Middle East due to the oil money have changed the preconditions of this mission strategy. Today Muslims use the old methods of the mission when building institutions as a Muslim “mission strategy”. This means that previous fruitful development because of the mission has changed to a competition about which institution is the best – and whose God is the greatest.

So the competition leads to jealousy – and then to prejudices, fear and enmity. Within this complex of problems the Dialogue Team works to create understanding, using diapraxis (acting together with people of another faith) to break down the prejudices, the fear and enmity and giving people an experience of the possibility to live in peace as good neighbours.

In the light of this the work of the Dialogue Team builds on insisting on fundamental human rights so as to live in freedom, to think, to believe and to express oneself freely (including the right to change one's religion), and the rights of women and children. This includes that

the work of the team must reject any kind of discrimination because of gender, ethnicity or religion, and also work with advocacy, which will take place in the countries, where we have partners, and in Denmark.

The aim is to co-operate in creating a society building on a just and continuing peace, so that everybody may live a secure life and create conditions for growth and welfare. This depends on a strong civic society where the individuals and the institutions will be able to work together and talk to each other across religious and cultural borders. In this border country the task of the mission is to point at the service of reconciliation.

This naturally raises the question what especially Danmission has to offer in relation to other NGOs, when it comes to working for peace and reconciliation.

Firstly, the word reconciliation is itself a classic, theologically loaded word interpreted for instance in the Christian idea of the Incarnation. It is also central in St. Paul's words: (*"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."* (2. Cor. 5,18-20).

Secondly, it is an important point when we travel in another context than the Western-European, that the people we work with are religious. This means that we have another basis to meet on in the question of peace and reconciliation than the one secular people have, because we have a common religious language to refer to in the dialogue. These aspects – or advantages – will often be overlooked in a Danish context, but it became obvious in connection with the two international crises caused by the Danish caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad.

Within the last 4-5 years Danmission has built an extensive network in Denmark and in the Muslim world among Christians as well as Muslims. This has put Danmission in constructive co-operation with for instance the so-called Arab Initiative by The Ministry Of foreign Affairs of Denmark. The team works to expand and increase this network co-operation, which underlines that Danmission is an important co-player in the dialogue between groups and cultures in Denmark as well as in the Middle East, which have traditionally had a hostile relationship with each other. In this connection the possibilities are investigated of becoming a member of Nifcon, the dialogue network of the Anglican Communion. The membership of Procmura will be extended. In the same manner Danmission has co-operated in building a network in South India between Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Christians. There are the same demands on the Dialogue Team concerning the viability of their work and projects as on the other work done by Danmission.

Ad 1: Inter-religious dialogue:

DEFINITION:

Inter-religious dialogue is understood as

- the spiritual dialogue or faith dialogue, i.e. the dialogue which takes place on the personal level where people share their faith, religious understanding or praxis with one another
- the theological dialogue where theological (dogmatic, ethical) themes are discussed – e.g. the views on Jesus or Prophet Muhammad

SUPERIOR OBJECTIVE:

The objective for the inter-religious dialogue is to create space for the meeting between people of different faiths to show one another during conversation the acknowledgement and respect which is laid down in us at the creation and in the faith in the one God, who is the father of all, and in this conversation to point at God's incarnation in Jesus Christ.

Ad 2: Intercultural dialogue:

DEFINITION:

The intercultural dialogue is the endeavour to bring two or more cultures into dialogue with one another in order to create a greater understanding between these cultures and to create peaceful co-existence.

SUPERIOR OBJECTIVE:

The goal of the intercultural dialogue is – on the basis of the Christian idea about creation -

- . to make space for respect and acknowledgement between people of different faiths
- to underline and to develop Christian values as equality between ethnicity, gender and religion
- to dissociate from discrimination

Ad 3: Work on peace and reconciliation

DEFINITION:

“As the Father has sent me, even so I send you...” is an important missiological word by Jesus to the disciples. The mission of Jesus was to create peace between God and man – and between men. In this connection Danmission considers the work of peace and reconciliation an important part of the dialogue work between people of different faiths and different religious groups. The work on peace and reconciliation is closely related to the intercultural dialogue.

SUPERIOR OBJECTIVE:

Having Christian presence as a point of departure, the objective for the work on peace and reconciliation is to help to reconcile religious groups, which for some time have been involved in mutual conflicts, so that they may find a place for talking together and establishing peaceful co-existence.

Ad 4: Diapraxis:

DEFINITION:

Diapraxis is the practical working together of two or more religious groups or cultures in order to brake down prejudices, fear and enmity between people. Diapraxis takes place in the border area between religions and cultures, and there will always be overlapping between the work of the Dialogue Team and the Poverty Team. Diapraxis builds on Christian presence and so is an expression of Christian witness in practice.

SUPERIOR OBJECTIVE:

The purpose of Diapraxis is to help different religious groups to live together as good neighbours and to work together in solving concrete problems in order to teach them that through co-operation they will obtain results which benefit both parties and make them happy, and through this co-operation to open the possibility to create dialogue between the participants.

Denmark:

Preamble:

The engagement of Danmission in meeting people in Denmark of other faiths began in the middle of the 1970s as a result of the growing immigration of guest workers. At the same time several Islam missionaries returned after serving in the Muslim world, and for them it was a continuous challenge to meet the many Muslims in Denmark. The question was raised several years at the meetings of DMS-representatives, and in 1978 a programme for mission in Denmark was accepted. The following year Bjarne Jørgensen was employed as an immigration secretary, and in 1984 "Mødestedet" ("The Meeting Point") was opened in Oehlenschlägergade – in 1995 it moved to Valdemarsgade. In 1997-99 DMS took part in an initiative to create "Folkekirkens Tværkulturelle Samarbejde" ("The Intercultural Co-operation of the Folk Church") in Odense. In 1998-2000 the general secretary of Danmission was chairman of The Bishops' Islam Committee, whose object was to guide the bishops about the challenges which Islam presented to The Danish Folk Church. The report "Samtalen fremmer forståelsen" ("Talking together improves the understanding") (December 2000) has up till now led to the creation of an interdiocesan forum: "Folkekirke og Religionsmøde" ("The Folk Church and Religion Dialogue") and to the employment of several pastors dealing with immigrants in the different dioceses.

Throughout the whole course of these events it has been stressed again and again from the very beginning that the local congregations must become involved in the work and must help sharing the expenses, which have grown to a considerable sum. Very early an financial co-operation began with the deanery of Vesterbro which since 1990 paid a part of the running expenses of Mødestedet (in the beginning DKK 80,000 a year, from 2004 increased to DKK 750,000 yearly), and through the formation of the concept of "Folkekirkens Tværkulturelle Samarbejde" in Odense it was decided that the parishes in Odense should carry the main part of the economy and Danmission support with about one third in the first phase. This agreement has now been discussed with the board and with the bishop of the Diocese of Funen to become reduced to a grant of DKK 100,000 in 2012, and from then the amount of DKK 100,000 to become a fixed contribution.

The object of the engagement of Danmission in the meeting with Muslims has partly been to become a role model for systematic work through the two institutions, and partly to inspire the friends of Danmission the take up the challenge locally. In many places the mission friends have taken up the challenge through different arrangements as "friends of refugees", helping with school homework, "middag på tværs" ("dinner across"), local diocesan committees etc. The local initiatives, which are not based institutionally, will become strengthened from the summer of 2008 with the employment of a part time network consultant.

SUPERIOR OBJECTIVE:

The work of Danmission on dialogue in Denmark is founded on the understanding that mission is meeting people of another faith with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This takes

place through Christian presence, witnessing and diaconal work, serving out neighbour – including advocacy.

Danmission supports the institutionally based work (Mødestedet and Folkekirkens Tværkulturelle Samarbejde i Odense) in order to create role models for the work based on the parishes.

Staff:

- *Harald Nielsen*: Manager of the Dialogue Team, country co-ordinator for Egypt and The Middle East, dialogue consultant for Procmura, Tanzania and Madagascar. Networker for all the Middle East.
- *Christa Lund Herum*: Information and fundraising, dialogue consultant for CEOSS and The Anglican Church in Egypt.
- *Agnete Holm*: Dialogue consultant for The Middle East, India, Myanmar and Cambodia.
- *Birgitte Nøhr Jahn*: Dialogue consultant for Denmark, 50% in the team, co-ordinator of the dialogue work in Denmark.
- *Thyra Smidt*: Leader of “Mødestedet” (“the Meeting Point”) in Copenhagen.
- *Inger Thomsen*: Assistant, co-ordinator of the teamwork, trained as a teacher.
- *Lorens Hedelund*: Unsalariated, assisting country co-ordinator for Pakistan (referring to the Program Manager).



The Conference Participants



The Opening Ceremony of the Conference



Professor Abdel Ati Mohammed Abdel Galil and Sheikh Soraga Fadhil Suleiman



Bishop Mouneer and Sheikh Fawzy Zefzaf



Conference Participants



Participants with the Grand Imam of Al Azhar, Dr. Tantaway



The Rev. Harald Nielsen and other participants



Rev. Harald ,Bishop Mouneer,Dr Johnson

"It is our duty to spare no effort in teaching our communities the right foundations that under gird the rights of citizenship. Our efforts should be characterized by continuity and persistence until we are able to enlighten society. This requires courage to face the criticism and aggression of those extremists who call for the denial of the rights of minorities."

The Most Rev. Dr. Mouneer Hanna Anis

Bishop of the Anglican/Episcopal Diocese of Egypt
with North Africa and the Horn of Africa
President Bishop of the Anglican/Episcopal
Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East

"To maintain peace and mitigate conflicts between Christians and Muslims are no easy tasks since there are growing religious movements within Christianity and Islam that tend to caricature the other. These movements revisit historical stereotypes and manufacture modern ones to breed animosity between adherents of the two faiths."

The Rev. Dr. Johnson Apenad Mbillah

Director of the Program for Christian-Muslim
Relations in Africa (PROCMURA)

"In talking together something is at stake between people. This is also the case with dialogue. In dialogue we want to have something to do with the other person. We do not come anonymously, but we come as the persons we are and accept our identity. There is a purpose with all we are doing, and that is being in dialogue."

The Rev. Harald Nielsen

Programme Leader of Dialogue, Danmission

