

National Muslim-Christian Initiative Launches in North America

Representatives of several Muslim organizations and Christian denominations have launched a National Muslim-Christian Initiative in North America. Fifteen representatives met this week near Washington D.C. The meeting – coordinated by Mr. Mohamed Elsanousi, Director of Communications and Community Outreach of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), and Rev. Dr. Gwynne Guibord, Consultant for interfaith relations of The Episcopal Church U.S.A. – was convened following consultations between numerous Muslim and Christian organizations and leaders in the recent past. The Initiative was further inspired by an unprecedented letter from Muslim to Christian leaders around the world, as well as mutual concerns over misrepresentations of Islam and stereotypes of Muslims in North America. “This Initiative is part of ongoing Muslim efforts to engage other faith communities in North America, and to bring about an understanding of common goals and reconciliation in our communities,” stated Dr. Syeed Sayyid, National Director in the ISNA Office for Interfaith and Community Alliances.

Christians and Muslims across the continent regularly encounter one another at their work places and in their local communities. Representatives to the Initiative discussed the desire for relationships of trust in these communities and explored areas of common concern and understanding. Initiative representatives set up five task groups to frame its work and prepare for future gatherings to be held twice a year. The Initiative also adopted a mission statement to shape this work in the coming years, as follows: *We, from various streams of Muslim and Christian communities, seek to enhance mutual understanding, respect, appreciation and support of what is Sacred for each other through dialogue, education and sustained visible encounters that foster and nurture relationships.*

“This Initiative of Muslim and Christian leaders sends a message to those in North America – We co-exist in vibrant communities where awareness and cooperation will be our common future together,” stated co-convenor, Dr. Peter Makari, co-Chair of the Interfaith Relations Commission of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. The Muslim-Christian Initiative will meet again in Chicago, in September of this year.