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To the Muslim authors of "A Common Word between Us and You" which was addressed to Christian Churches throughout the world:

The General Board of Mennonite Church Canada commends you for your thoughtful and respectful call for a conversation of peace between Muslims and Christians. This leadership body of Mennonite Church Canada herewith adds its voice of support and encouragement to your initiative.

At the annual Assembly of Mennonite Church Canada in July, 2008 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, delegates considered a call from its Faith and Life Committee, the body commissioned to give guidance in theological matters in our denomination, to respectfully engage people of other religious faiths.

We recognize that there are two important strands of wisdom found within Christian Scripture. One strand holds God to be present and at work in the whole world, not limited to any one story or one culture. Your exposition of the two commandments of love, love for God and love of neighbour found in all three Abrahamic faiths illustrates that conviction. Thus we affirm the importance of a respectful dialogue with those who profess a faith and spiritual way different from our Christian one. Like the Apostle Paul in his speech on the Acropolis as recorded in the Book of Acts, we should seek common understanding and be slow to condemn. As people of peace, Mennonite Christians are interested in promoting peace with people of different religious persuasions.

The other strand of wisdom found in our Christian Scripture invites us to claim and proclaim the particular truth given in Jesus Christ. As Mennonite Christians we confess that Jesus is the one who most fully reveals God to us. We confess that, as God's Son, Jesus speaks and acts on behalf of God. As such Jesus guides our view of life and our ethics.

Holding these two strands of wisdom together allows us as Mennonite Christians to appreciate the common ground within the different branches of the Abrahamic faith traditions. At the same time, we bring to this relationship our conviction, as one of the historic Peace Churches in the Christian tradition, that Jesus, through his teachings, life and death, clarifies what love for the neighbour entails. At the heart of Jesus' revelation is the call to love even the one whom our society wants us to name as our enemy (Matthew 5:43-45). God's love, as exemplified in Christ, overcomes human enmity and conflict by rejecting violence. God's love enables diverse communities to be reconciled and to seek the common good by working together for peace and justice. Thus we bring to the celebration of the common word between us the firm conviction that Jesus' command to love extends to all of humanity.

Frequently the religions of the world fix their attention on how they are different from one another. "A Common Word Between Us and You" highlights in a very helpful way the centrality of the conviction within the Abrahamic faiths that the God who calls us to love our neighbour is One. We owe a word of gratitude to you, for inviting us to affirm the common word between us for the betterment of humankind. To this end, we add our voice and signature to your initiative.

Robert J. Suderman
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