

## THE EXPANSE OF INTERFAITH

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) may well be the cultivation of the soil that supported the growth on the interfaith movement. Following the council, great minds and hearts like Fr. Thomas Keating, Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman, Fr. Bede Griffith, Thich Nhat Hanh, The Dalai Lama, Huston Smith, Kabir Helminski, Br. Wayne Teasdale, Ken Wilber, Karen Armstrong, Andrew Harvey, Rev. Dr. Matthew Fox, Daisy Kahn, Dr. Eboo Patel, and many more, provide us with honest deep scholarship to grow in insight and wisdom regarding interfaith matters. Interfaith grew from conventional interfaith dialogue, to trans-traditional, to interspirituality and integral spirituality; the religion of the future. This small document is presented to introduce individuals to some of the elements of that evolution of interfaith, interspiritual, and integral thought.



The **Perennial Tradition** encompasses the recurring themes in all of the world’s religions and philosophies that continue to say:

There is a Divine Reality underneath and inherent in the world of things,

There is in the human soul a natural capacity, similarity, and longing for this Divine Reality, and

The final goal of existence is union with this Divine Reality.

**The Golden Rule** Also known as “Ethic of Reciprocity” Samples:

Not one of you truly believe until you wish for others what you wish for yourself.

I am a stranger to no one; and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed I am a friend to all.

Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful

**Guidelines for Interreligious Understanding**

Father Thomas Keating is a Trappist Monk who is the convener of the Snowmass Conference and a member of the international monastic interreligious movement. The 15 member group of spiritual teachers from a variety of the world religions — Buddhist, Tibetan Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Islamic, Native American, Russian Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic — gathered at St. Benedict’s Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado to formulate these agreed upon guidelines for interreligious understanding:

1. The world religions bear witness to the experience of Ultimate Reality to which they give various names: Brahman, Allah, (the) Absolute, God, Great Spirit.
2. Ultimate Reality cannot be limited by any name or concept.
3. Ultimate Reality is the ground of infinite potentiality and actualization.
4. Faith is opening, accepting, and responding to Ultimate Reality. Faith in this sense precedes every belief system.
5. The potential for human wholeness – or in other frames of reference, enlightenment, salvation, transformation, blessedness, nirvana – is present in every human person.
6. Ultimate Reality may be experienced not only through religious practices but also through nature, art, human relationships, and service to others.
7. As long as the human condition is experienced as separate from Ultimate Reality, it is subject to ignorance, illusion, weakness and suffering.
8. Disciplined practice is essential to the spiritual life; yet spiritual attainment is not the result of one’s own efforts, but the result of the experience of oneness (unity) with Ultimate Reality.
9. Prayer is communion with Ultimate Reality, whether it is regarded as personal, impersonal (transpersonal), or beyond them both.

### **Charter for Compassion** (Karen Armstrong)

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others—even our enemies—is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate ~ to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures ~ to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies.

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

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### **Elements of a Universal Spirituality:** (Wayne Teasdale)

1. actualized moral capacity
2. solidarity with the earth and all beings
3. deep nonviolence
4. humility of heart
5. spiritual practice
6. mature self-knowledge
7. simplicity of life and lifestyle
8. love in action – compassionate service, and
9. prophetic voice and action.

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### **Five civic goods that interfaith organizations promote:**

- (1) Reducing prejudice and increasing understanding; dignity and rights of all,
- (2) Strengthening social cohesion and reducing the chances for identity-based conflict; building relationships,
- (3) Bridging social capital and addressing social problems; creating networks of communities working toward positive civic purposes,
- (4) Fostering the community of identity-communities and reducing isolation; positive engagement of diversity, and
- (5) Creating binding narratives for diverse societies; E Pluribus Unum (out of many one), Beloved Community, Indivisible with liberty and justice for all.

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### **Interfaith Books**

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### **Interspiritual Books**

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### **Interfaith Terms**

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#### **Common Good**

principles and structures that groups benefit from and people generally agree they have a collective interest to uphold

#### **Democracy**

freedom to advance one's deepest personal convictions in public life

#### **Diversity**

people with different identities interacting with one another; diversity is a fact not a destination

#### **Pluralism**

energetic engagement of diversity toward a positive end; pluralism is an achievement; the goal of interfaith

### Relationship

positive, constructive, warm, caring cooperative engagement, and concern for others' well-being

### Unity

diversity embraced by an infinitely generous love; unity is not uniformity

### Faith

When we speak of *interfaith*, "*faith*" is not solely about religion. It is about the role of spiritual experience inside and outside of formal religion, expected and unexpected, told in people's own words, and brought to life in unique ways. *Faith* is a powerful healer, transformer, and changer of lives. The overriding message is that we are part of something greater than ourselves. There is a greater force that connects us all and it is good for each person to find a path that leads to a *faith* that connects them to the greater whole.

### Interfaith

groups of people who interact around religion differently and their faith identities are engaged by that interaction

### Interfaith Leader

organizes the kinds of activities and encounters that strengthen a religiously diverse democracy

### Interspirituality

the sharing of spiritual resources across traditions in a willingness to touch and taste the mystical depth in another tradition; not a synthesis of existing religions or new religion