

# Living Faithfully in the United States Today

The Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research (IECR) is pleased to offer *Living Faithfully in the United States Today* as a resource for study, discussion, and conversation.

This resource was developed, as detailed in Section III below, following two years of work, in 1999 and 2000. The Institute is grateful for the cooperation and assistance of the Office on Interfaith Relations of the [National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA](#) and the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the [National Conference of Catholic Bishops](#).

The Institute is committed by its mission statement "to discern the meaning of Christian identity and unity in a religiously and culturally diverse nation and world, and to communicate that meaning for the mission of the church and the renewal of human community." The Institute believes interreligious dialogue is critically important in our time, and believes also that how to engage in interreligious dialogue is a critically important ecumenical issue. Much can be accomplished, of course, as adherents of different traditions deal directly with things that divide them. But much can also be accomplished when such persons consider together issues they have in common, such as how to live faithfully in the United States today.

The Institute thanks all who accepted the invitation to participate in the program that has produced this document. Their names are listed in the Appendix. While the text was drafted by the co-chairs of the project (John Borelli, NCCB; Patrick Henry, IECR; Jay Rock, NCCC), it has been revised in light of suggestions made by many participants, and everyone has indicated willingness to be associated with it.

*Living Faithfully in the United States Today* is a publication of the Institute; it is not an official statement of any church or churches, or of any other religious institution. The Institute hopes this document will stimulate discussion in many different settings.

## CONTENTS

### I. Introduction : The Way of Conversation

### II. One Nation and Many Religions

#### A. Meaning of "faithfully"

#### B. The question

### III. A Lived Experience of Faithfulness

#### A. Who we are

#### B. Where we were

#### C. A four-phase dynamic

1. Story telling
2. Framing important issues and key questions
3. Addressing fears, prejudices, and isolation
4. Celebrating each other's joys and building mutually supporting communities in a pluralistic society

#### IV. Issues of Faithful Living

##### A. Issues arising when we engage one another

1. Why dialogue?
2. Feeling insecure
3. Getting out of our boxes
4. Speaking up
5. Respect and civility
6. Necessity of dialogue
7. Spiritual and intellectual growth

##### B. Conflicts and mutual concerns

1. Public issues
2. Self-definition
3. A democratic society
4. Communicating with one another and together
5. Living the truth
6. Teachings, change, and challenges
7. Handing the tradition to the next generation

##### C. Strategies for living together as friends

1. A strategy for a common project
2. More general strategies

#### V. Conclusion : The Way of Conversation

##### A. My story in time

##### B. My story among these stories

##### C. Our stories together

##### D. Character of the stories

##### E. Consequences of our story telling

##### F. First-person discourse and open-ended agendas

#### **I. Introduction : The Way of Conversation**

Many people suspect that interreligious dialogue is beyond them. It suggests reference books and footnotes and advanced degrees. Someone might give up in frustration: *If that's what it takes, I can't do it.*

But there is another way, in which academic learning or professional expertise is not the most important tool. It is the way of conversation, of story telling, of giving a first person account of one's own life. This document is the result of the way of conversation, which is also the way of listening.

Who we were, how we came to be together, how we organized our time, you will learn in Section III. For now, in this introduction, we want to say just a little to whet your appetite. The sentences in quotation marks are from the record of what was said and written when people gathered in Collegeville, Minnesota, during the summers of 1999 and 2000. The remarks convey not what necessarily happens in such conversation, but the sort of thing that can happen-and could happen for you. Because everyone, and every group, is unique, what is said here is a "for instance."

You need not fear appearing foolish or ignorant. The object of this sort of interreligious conversation is not comparing and contrasting doctrines, but offering narratives. "I previously didn't consider myself faithful," said one, because "I thought-now I see I was mistaken-that 'being faithful' meant having all the answers." All of us are experts on our own life, and if we have tried to live faithfully within our religious tradition, then we have something authoritative to say about living faithfully. "Talk is the way we let each other know what's inside."

As we speak and listen to one another, we discover that to live faithfully is not measured by checking a list or keeping score. Living faithfully is the shape of a story and of a collection of stories, not the sum at the end of a balance sheet. "It's not a matter of 'Who has the most wisdom?' but 'What is the wisdom we can bring together?'" If one says, "At last I've figured it out," another says, "I've been practicing the tradition for thirty-two years, and still have no idea what it's about"-and both are expressions of faithfulness.

There are some preconditions for this sort of conversation. "I find that there is a great desire to discuss religious issues and spiritual concerns in my circle of acquaintances, but also a hesitancy because we have been raised with the notion that one does not discuss religion and politics." The people who gather need to have, at minimum, a curiosity about one another and a predisposition to learn rather than criticize, "not simply to talk, but to look into each other's eyes." You should expect that greater knowledge and understanding will promote a healthier, not a more dysfunctional, community. Even if you do not so intend at the beginning, you need to be prepared for the possibility that you might become a supporter of the efforts of people in other traditions to live faithfully within their traditions.

The stories of others, even others whose ways seem at first glimpse to be exotic, weird, or wrong, have a way of transforming us, expanding our world. "You can accomplish more, once you've built a relationship." "When I hear what everyone is saying, I find answers I always had on my mind but I didn't know how to ask the questions." "We didn't know otherwise before you spoke to us." "When you go from here you take a part of me, and I'll have part of you." "If I don't

find myself at a constantly expanding table where I belong too, I haven't been faithful." "The doors of my heart are open for others to enter." "The truth that we offer is experience in practice."

## **II. One Nation and Many Religions**

All religious communities that have borne the qualification "American" have had to ask of themselves this question in some form: How can we live faithfully according to our deepest religious convictions in this pluralistic situation? Put directly: When in my experience living in the United States has it been very difficult to be faithful to my religious tradition, and when has living in the United States especially aided me in being faithful to my religious tradition? Or, with emphasis on individual responsibility: What would I have to do, or stop doing, to consider that I am not living faithfully in continuity with my tradition and religious practice? No community avoids these questions, because they are inextricably connected with every community's identity, integrity, future hopes, and survival.

### **A. Meaning of "faithfully"**

The words "faithfully" or "faithful" appear in many contexts. When a husband and wife are loyal to one another and steadfast in the vows they have made to each other, they are "faithful." The life of a monastic, or any member of a religious order who takes formal vows, is measured by faithfulness to those vows and to one's community. An accurate accounting of facts or a carefully reproduced rendition is "faithful" to an original event or occurrence. A member of a worshipping community is counted among "the faithful." For those who believe in the God who reveals and makes promises, "faith" means primarily to trust in God who speaks the truth; the "faithful" are those who live in accordance with God's word.

"Faith" is an act of a person or a community, a quality of believers, a term for a religious tradition, a statement of beliefs, and much more. In religious communities not inclined to refer to faith in God, practitioners put their trust in spiritual guides, their teachings, or an insight into a reality greater than any individual's conditioned ideas. This style of life also requires "faithfulness."

### **B. The question**

How do people live faithfully in the United States today? Does America, the context for myriad cultures and religions, truly value religion and the particular religious contributions of religious groups? Religion generally seems pushed into the private lives of individuals. Citizenship is the common and expected behavior for the public realm. But such a division between private and public, according to many citizens who are faithful members of religious communities, allows less important values to obscure the convictions which religious communities might use to define the common good. While privacy of faith may allow each community to thrive separately, the whole of society will eventually impinge on every community.

The landscape of the United States is dotted with churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and other places of worship—even whole mountains, deserts, and forests, made holy by the chants,

ceremonies, and sacred accounts repeated in their precincts. Indeed, religion pervaded the lives of the inhabitants of the continent five hundred years ago, of the first European explorers and settlers, and of subsequent immigrants. Some peoples were forcibly brought to this continent as slaves, indentured servants, or forced laborers with dependents, who often had to forfeit their traditions. Many of these accepted the religion of their masters, which they often transformed into something of their own. Others maintained, sometimes secretly, their original practices and beliefs. This country has also given rise to new religious movements and continues to provide a home for numerous religious traditions brought by generations of immigrants.

The interactions of cultures and ethnicities, religious beliefs and practices, and historical circumstances-sometimes violent, sometimes consciously negotiated, at other times benignly indifferent-led to the development of a tradition of religious freedom in the United States. This tradition has been enormously influential throughout the world. The commitment to religious freedom has unfolded with each new generation. To be sure, the tradition is also marked by mistakes, failures, and violations. Still, the understanding of religious freedom continues to evolve as part of the American experience in the present generation and with the arrival on these shores of every new religious community. In a society with this hugely important freedom, religious and civic symbols exercise enormous power. The United States has become one nation with an exceedingly rich diversity of cult and belief.

### **III. A Lived Experience of Faithfulness**

The Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research for thirty years has fostered programs promoting understanding among various religious and cultural groups. For this project, the individuals who staff interreligious relations at the National Council of Churches of Christ and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops joined the Institute's executive director to plan a consultation to explore the issue of religious pluralism. These three persons functioned as the facilitators of the project and, with enthusiastic support from their boards, convened twenty-two persons of various faith traditions. The persons to be invited would personify different kinds of diversity and would ask of themselves and one another the broad question: *How do you live faithfully according to your convictions in the religiously plural society of the United States?*

The facilitators were not at all certain what would happen when this question was asked in such a diverse group. Nearly everyone who was invited was acquainted with one of the facilitators, but success or failure did not hinge on already existing associations. Participants had not been asked to do any specific preparation. There were no assigned readings. The facilitators requested that everyone address the question personally, using autobiographical narrative that brings both joyous and painful experiences into the open and that helps clarify both fulfillment and unresolved difficulties. Such multi-sided conversations encourage brevity, clarity of speech, and development of a habit of listening, but the outcome is never certain. An element of "not-knowing" is essential. There is always the possibility that for one reason or another the individuals of such a diverse group will not function well together. But the facilitators had no "Plan B." The conversation that the question generated was not in service of some other agenda. The question was the agenda, and if it got us into "stuck places" now and then, that is where we were supposed to be. Everyone had to trust the group's sense of direction.

## **A. Who we are**

Twenty-six persons are responsible for this document. We spent a week together in each of two summers—twenty-two in August 1999, twenty-one in August 2000 (five from the first gathering were unable to return, and four new participants were added to the second). Ten of the twenty-six are women, sixteen men. We are four Buddhists, eight Christians (including a Navajo), four Hindus, five Jews, four Muslims, and one Midewiwin (Ojibwa). We are Americans of diverse ethnic backgrounds—African, European, Japanese, Mexican, Native, Palestinian, South Asian, and Southeast Asian.

Using personal narrative, we quickly overcame the wariness of newcomers and strangers and reached consensus on the usefulness of story telling, on how to frame issues and questions together as a group of diverse religious persons, and on the significance of addressing our fears and prejudices. We exchanged stories of frustration, and some of us even argued with one another on how to deal with prejudice and oppression when so few seem to care. We discovered very quickly that our common human concerns, aspirations, and frustrations were stronger than our uncertainty about our religious differences.

Towards the end of the meeting, we also felt a little more vulnerable because of the exposure of our serious feelings and non-negotiable beliefs. We almost expected others in the group to probe our irritations or to criticize certain perceived weaknesses. Gradually, we became aware of one another's vulnerability and the mutual concern we truly felt for one another's situation, particularly as a group of persons of faith. At the end, we had formed an emotional bond, due in large part to the gravity of the issues we had discussed forthrightly together.

During the ensuing year, the 1999 gathering had a ripple effect, its influence expanding from our lives into the range of groups with whom we interact. The experience at Collegeville in August became for us a measure for interfaith relations until we could reconvene. Some of us published articles or reports; some used other means to narrate the experiences of the group. We all seemed to speak about it with friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and many others.

For the twenty-one who came in 2000, it was more than a dialogue. It was a gathering of friends living faithfully according to their diverse traditions and looking forward to a group experience that both enlivened and was enlivened by their faithful practice. The group bonded almost immediately. Those who rendezvoused at the Minneapolis/Saint Paul Airport hugged one another warmly, watched nervously for late arrivals, assisted one another with luggage, and fell into ceaseless conversation during the 90-minute ride to Collegeville. The first evening, the Navajo participant presented gifts to the three facilitators in thanksgiving for bringing the group back together. The seventeen who returned explained how much the first meeting meant to them in the intervening year, and then encouraged the four newcomers to introduce themselves. Some participants said that they felt closer to this group of friends than to many in their own religious communities, and two mentioned their somber awareness that some in their religious communities would be happy if they were expelled.

During the first full day together, we responded to the question of living faithfully. A few of us spoke of the pain we felt for not being able to speak with a grandparent or grandparents either

because of our inability to speak a language or because of the separation by death. Our family relationships resonated among us, particularly our concerns about our children. Later in the week, in an extended discussion of gender issues that cut across all religious traditions, a woman who is comfortable in her traditional roles in her religious community expressed her personal pain for not being able to bear children and her need to create a new role in the face of the pressures of her religious community. A man cautioned that we must not too quickly assume that we understand each other; some experiences are so deeply different that they can be comprehended only by an act of imagination, not by a naive "I know just how you feel." Another participant mentioned how the views of another had truly bothered her as a woman, but the whole experience of this dialogue on life issues forced her to address her own disagreement. Her perceptions were felt by others: We will disagree over certain issues, but disagreement is only a part of our relationship.

As conversations unfolded in plenary sessions, in small groups, and two by two, we sympathized with one another over issues of belonging to and participating in a religious tradition. We all found that the personal questions we face as we practice our own tradition are also faced by people in the other traditions. We felt we were not merely observers of the practices of others. The similarity of feelings, concerns, frustrations, and hopes drew practitioners and observers into a special bond of interreligious friendship.

Our conversations often started in the everyday, such as matters of work or parenting, or features of our traditions that might appear as incidentals to those looking on from outside. But frequently it was only a step from the everyday to the perennial questions of how we live the truth that guides our lives. The interplay of truth and incidentals, of practice and principle, led to several lively discussions. Each of us was initially anxious about being misunderstood, both by those who share our religious beliefs and by those who do not. But there were surprises in store. It was to be expected that each participant would attempt to show the others how his or her religious tradition enriches the American experience, and this certainly happened. By the time we were done, however, all of us were also telling each of us: "Here's how your faithful living in your religious tradition enriches the rest of us as we live faithfully in ours."

## **B. Where we were**

Environment may be the least important factor in the success or failure of a project such as this. We hope that other groups can engage in fruitful conversation in different kinds of locations, especially in the locales where they live and work. Most individuals probably are not offered such an opportunity to withdraw from the fast pace of daily life for several days to reflect in a pleasant and relaxing retreat. But some degree of withdrawal is necessary, especially from the tyranny of the clock. This does not mean there are no time limits: Indeed, each personal story at the start is kept to fifteen or twenty minutes, with a gentle bell sounded two minutes before it is to be wrapped up. But there needs to be enough time overall for the conversation to develop its own natural pace.

Our consultation unfolded amidst the rhythm of a summer schedule at the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research on the campus of Saint John's Abbey and University in Collegeville, Minnesota, with morning, noon, and evening prayer recited by the monastic

community at the Abbey Church, daily mass, and ample time for walks and other exercise. Additionally, participants were able to join the community of Benedictine sisters at nearby Saint Benedict's Monastery for worship, and to tour the unique environmentally-grounded pottery studio and kiln on the Saint John's campus. We usually met in morning, afternoon, and evening sessions from Wednesday evening until Tuesday morning, except Saturday evening and Sunday morning.

Each day a particular faith group held a service and invited the others to attend. The Buddhists invited others to join them in quiet sitting at sunrise in the Institute's chapel each morning. Most participants took their meals together in the campus dining hall, although some prepared meals in their living quarters to meet their dietary needs. A Hindu hosted all the other participants for sanctified vegetarian dinners leading up to devotional worship (puja) on the final evening. In the first year, representatives from all the traditions blessed the new home of the Institute's executive director and his wife. In the second year, the Ojibwa participant held a pipe ceremony, praying on behalf of the group. On Friday, the Muslims joined the nearby Islamic community for noon day prayer and that evening invited the other participants to join them in ritual washing and to attend evening prayers. The Jewish participants lit Shabbat candles Friday evening and closed the Sabbath for the group on Saturday evening. The Buddhists held a ceremony of chanting and meditation. Most participants attended one of the scheduled daily prayers in the Abbey Church and joined the Christians attending the Sunday Eucharist.

The environment provided by the facilities and the calendar created an atmosphere of recollection and retreat. The natural setting with wildlife, woods, and lakes, and the flexible schedule, all contributed to a spaciousness conducive to reflection, sharing, and creativity. The sounds of wind, loons, fish on the water, and other wildlife blended with prayers, religious hymns, and silence, providing a background for the ritual of story telling. The schedule allowed both time apart, when significant reflection and insight can take place, and time together.

In the first year we adopted the image of the dream catcher. As our Navajo participant described it, the dream catcher is a web with a hole in the center. The web, symbolizing the circle of life itself, catches good ideas and dreams, while the bad ones pass through the hole. The dream catcher image served to unify our interwoven perceptions and feelings for one another as we reached a deeper and unexpected level of sharing. It is significant that at this level there was something far more than mere communication of information about our religious practices and beliefs. In the second year, a variety of images emerged: the festive table of group sharing, the safe container of the environment, the plunge into the unexpected, and the fish bowl dialogue within a dialogue. The festive table is the place where all without exception are invited to share and receive gifts. The group as a whole each year created a safe and confidential container, allowing us to speak our hearts and souls. We could step out of the confinements in which we and others place ourselves and see and be seen anew. The plunge is a dive into the unknown, which this living interfaith experience seemed to be for many of us. The fish bowl is a dialogue within a dialogue, a technique volunteered out of the group, in which some participate and others witness, and which requires a level of discipline, attention, and listening not occurring in ordinary and everyday conversations.

Our most powerful image for the second meeting was the wood-burning kiln on the campus of Saint John's University—a symbol of transformation, of unexpected outcome, and of trusting a process that is beyond human control. The firing of a kiln calls for purification, prayer, and community participation. Raw materials, such as clay pots, are changed into new realities. Once ceramic has been fired, it is transformed and cannot revert to what it once was. Having experienced this intensely personal and deeply emotional dialogue of life, we too were transformed into friends in faith, though we hold different beliefs and follow different practices. This consultation was a transforming experience for us, a spiritual formation for living faithfully in the United States today.

### **C. A four-phase dynamic**

In both 1999 and 2000, the first full day of our gathering was spent responding to the central question through personal narrative and story telling. In 1999 the question was posed this way: *When in your experience living in the United States has it been very difficult to be faithful to your religious tradition, and when has living in the United States especially aided you in being faithful to your religious tradition?* In 2000, this way: *What would you have to do, or stop doing, for you to consider that you are not living faithfully in continuity with your religious tradition and religious practice?* We discovered that our central question is renewable. Each time we came back to it, it seemed fresh, and even after the consultation was over, participants reported that it continued to present itself in new and provocative ways.

Between the two gatherings, all participants were sent a memorandum summarizing in general terms what had been discovered in the first. Near the conclusion of the 1999 meeting, participants identified a four-phase dynamic or process through which we felt our conversation was unfolding. We believe these four steps are important for meaningful engagement with the question of living faithfully in a religiously plural context, and we believe they might serve as a blueprint for others to use in promoting dialogue on common living in a multi-religious society.

**1. Story telling:** This is a way of introducing and opening ourselves to one another. This method allows us to "speak ourselves" into our own religious traditions and into the stories shared by those of other religious traditions, and allows others to speak themselves into our stories and the larger stories of our own religious traditions.

**2. Framing important issues and key questions:** Questions arise in all our minds as we each try to live faithfully in this multi religious society, and we naturally reach out to one another for help and sympathy by attempting to state together the major concerns and questions we have as people trying to live faithfully according to our religious traditions.

**3. Addressing fears, prejudices, and isolation:** Fears, hurts, misunderstandings, and feelings of uneasiness naturally arise in story telling and framing issues and questions together. Disagreements, differences of opinion and views, gaps in our understanding of one another, partly or fully revealed pains and fears arise. We feel vulnerable with one another, and are in many cases drawn closer together. At the same time, this sharing of feelings and issues tests the group's willingness to get along with each other despite reactions we might have to what we are hearing, and the serious difficulties we might have with one another over questions of religious

practice and the history of the interaction of our religions both in the United States and elsewhere.

**4. Celebrating each other's joys and building mutually supporting communities in a pluralistic society:** Through these steps of ever-deepening sharing, we reach a point at which we desire and intend to live afterwards as friends who are comfortable recognizing one another's sources of joy and happiness and able to respond with support for one another and with the strength of human friendship. We begin to think about ways to build communities that will uphold our full commitment to our own religious practices and also our interconnectedness and mutual support of each other.

#### **IV. Issues of Faithful Living**

We seek to live in faithfulness to our own traditions, and also to live in engagement with each other in ways that can help us build mutually supporting communities. In so doing we encounter a number of issues. We enumerate here the main ones that arose in our conversation. Not every group will deal with all of these, and some groups will surely find others.

Contexts can be very different: In some places there is little diversity, and the issues that arise will be similar to those in some small worshiping communities, while in other places, especially large urban areas, people of many religious traditions and cultural practices live side by side. Nowadays, a small town or an urban neighborhood can have a great diversity of religious groups. But learning to live faithfully in the company of others who are also living faithfully in different traditions is not something to do reluctantly, only when others move in down the block and cannot be avoided. We have discovered that engagement with one another enriches us all. We recommend seeking each other out. There is no need to wait until the neighborhood changes.

##### **A. Issues arising when we engage one another**

###### **1. Why dialogue?**

Entering into interreligious relationships stirs concern, even resistance. In many cases, if we enter into relationships with people of another religious tradition, we may meet with curiosity, misunderstanding, or even hostility within our own communities. Some who suspect our motives may ask the most basic question: Why get together at all? Clarity of purpose is very helpful in allaying initial concerns and enabling participation:

- Is our desire to learn about each other's religions so that we can teach others in our own religious community?
- Do we want to bring people around a common table? For what purposes?
- Do we want to build a network of people who can be called on to address particular issues or situations as they arise?

Cultivating respect for each other and our various traditions, educating ourselves and our communities, and service to humanity are all reasons to build mutually supporting relationships.

## **2. Feeling insecure**

Many in all of our communities have underlying fears. We brought our fears even into the protected conversation we had in Collegeville. Here are a few fears people may have:

- Individuals and groups struggle with a variety of insecurities regarding identity, culture, and religion, and these insecurities may come into play on entering into interreligious conversation.
- Some fear that they will have to confront proselytizing.
- Others fear being converted away from their tradition in some way, or fear that their own religious tradition will be somehow eroded, or not prove strong enough to sustain them in an interreligious conversation.
- Many feel on guard, and sense that they will have to defend their own tradition, or fear having to justify their own beliefs and practices to the outside world.
- Some in our communities may begin to feel excluded as others build relations across traditions, or move into cooperation in addressing social problems.
- Some fear that they might be plunged back into old rivalries or competitions between religious traditions.
- Still others feel insecure or shy about opening up to others.

In interreligious relationships we expose ourselves and our traditions to others. This is risky, as well as full of opportunity. The highest degree of respect, as well as careful listening, is essential.

## **3. Getting out of our boxes**

In all of our traditions there are people who see little reason for building relationships with those of another tradition. There are also people who see in the texts and teachings of their own tradition encouragement for building relationships with others, but their desire to reach beyond their own community has not been kindled, or the opportunity to do so has not arisen.

In our conversations, we found that many of us had struggled within ourselves or with others in our own religious tradition regarding how to get out of the "box" of our own particular tradition or our current way of living it in order to serve all human beings.

Resistance to stepping beyond the "boxes" of our traditions and familiar patterns can arise out of ignorance, or from a lack of interest, motivation, or desire to get to know people from other traditions. In responding to this resistance, we talked about these questions:

- How do we develop compassion in our communities?
- How can we encourage those in our own religious traditions to be open to the needs of human beings, apart from who they are in their religious, cultural, or ethnic identities?
- How do we teach our own people to be willing to reach out to help, even if unsure as how best to do so?
- How will we deal with the parts of our traditions that tell us to stay in our own "box" and care only for those who are like us?

Caring for and serving others is a particularly strong motive for, and benefit of, building relationships with people in other religious traditions.

#### **4. Speaking up**

At times it will be necessary to speak up to represent our traditions faithfully to counter inaccurate characterizations, unwarranted assumptions of sameness between traditions, or certain expressions that are insensitive. This is an important motivation for developing interreligious ties. Here are a few examples:

- This need to inform and defend arises especially in cases in which a group is the target of attacks, stereotyping, or denial of civil rights.
- Then, too, interreligious relationships can be hampered when participants remain too careful about what they are willing to say, overly protective of themselves, or too defensive about their own tradition to speak freely.
- It may become necessary to challenge the underlying ideas of an interreligious discussion; for example, the idea that all believe in God or ground their lives in relation to God (this way of thinking is not part of the Buddhist tradition in particular); or the assumption that all agree on a moral concern; or the belief that the American experience is more exceptional than it really is.

#### **5. Respect and civility**

In general, respecting each other in relation to the ways we practice and the beliefs we hold is essential. It may be that we do not feel comfortable with, or like, a particular religious practice or tenet. In some cases, we may consider certain practices or beliefs to be harmful or untrue. It can be necessary to raise objections to parts of each other's traditions, and it is appropriate to discuss all of this as part of relating with one another. But it is inappropriate to dismiss or ridicule the person or people who so believe or so practice. Attacking the value of the person who engages in religious practices and beliefs of which we disapprove not only undermines the possibility of relationship, but compromises one's own faithfulness.

#### **6. Necessity of dialogue**

Specific events often press in on us and call for a response that engages us in interreligious relations. Among such events or needs are: intermarriage, deaths, crime, the arrival in a neighborhood of a family of another religious tradition, the individual spiritual needs of people in trouble, and travel abroad in countries where we need to know about religious etiquette or custom. Such situations call for knowledge of others and their traditions, and often require interreligious approaches.

At this time in our history, many people in a great variety of occupations have a need for information about other religious traditions. This has become particularly apparent already in the work of people such as those called upon to conduct funeral services; prison chaplains; police officers; flight attendants and international travel agents; physicians, nurses, and others in hospital work; teachers of cultural diversity, public relations workers; corporate heads who deal

with international relationships; college and seminary teachers, and teachers at all levels who have students from other religious traditions; and those involved in psychology and counseling.

Such persons will frequently need to find ways to make connections with people and institutions in religious traditions other than their own in order to offer those whom they are trying to serve the support they need. We are all challenged to be sensitive to the needs of others, even when expressed in unfamiliar terms, and to develop the ability to communicate our care across divisions of culture and religion.

## **7. Spiritual and intellectual growth**

Opportunities to nurture understanding and mutual support among our religious communities emerge as we develop interreligious relationships:

- We can learn from, and be inspired by, those truths and lessons of a religious tradition that seem to transcend that tradition, are full of spiritual insight for other religious persons, and are part of the whole human experience.
- Engaging each other, we can enhance our growth as a human culture, a society, a country, and a part of one world.
- In relationship we can see the actual religious and cultural practices of people in other religious traditions, beyond our own interpretations and partial perceptions.
- Together we can develop a more complete understanding of the matrix of issues and world views in which we live, of the concerns and politics of our different religious communities, and the roles they can play in dealing with these issues.
- As we begin to develop a sense of sharing one community, we can discern and develop the role of religious leaders and institutions in solving social problems, based on their moral authority to inspire involvement, and to develop and implement ideas and action plans.
- We can share human struggles and spiritual insights, and thus support each other in our development as faithful people.

## **B. Conflicts and mutual concerns**

### **1. Public issues**

Specific social issues and the pain of exclusion associated with them affect all of us and are present in our interreligious relationships. Discussion of issues such as these can be profitable in building understanding and trust:

- Racism is an interreligious issue, not only because it can surface when people of different religious traditions meet, but also because it affects us all. If a Black church is burned down, it is a matter of bigotry, and therefore an interreligious issue.
- The impact of technology on our religious practice and our society requires our attention, both to the ways in which it interferes with faithful living and to how we can use it positively.

- We share the concern to develop ways of living that do no further harm to the environment and help us think about our interconnectedness with the earth.
- The roles of women, ways in which they are subordinated, and sexism within and outside our traditions, are also concerns that need to be discussed in building interreligious community.
- Issues of sexual orientation and human sexuality are divisive and create much pain within our separate religious traditions and in our society.
- Proselytization and targeted conversion efforts are of particular concern to those who seek interreligious relationships.
- Issues such as abortion and the death penalty also elicit strong feelings and disagreement within and between our religious communities.

At times, joint social activism and coalitions of religious institutions on these and other issues oppose the positions and policies of others in our society, and even in our traditions. For the building of mutually supporting communities, it is important to undertake social engagement in ways that are sensitive to the different positions and approaches among us, and that do not deny the rights of, or needlessly hurt, those with whom we may disagree.

## **2. Self-definition**

Our definitions of ourselves affect our interactions with others. Our behavior will be different in relation to how we frame our group identity. For example, do we see our own religious tradition or cultural group: a) over against the outside world; b) being a significant part of a whole society; or c) one tradition or group among many in the same community?

## **3. A democratic society**

We all experience tensions between our religious practice and our national culture, and in many cases between religious tradition and ethnic heritage, or between religious commitments and family ties. In addition, we all deal with tensions between public and private expressions of our religious traditions. Exploring these tensions and diversities can be challenging and requires trust, but is helpful in building interreligious community.

## **4. Communicating with one another and together**

The style and form of communication and interaction matter. People of different religious traditions and cultural groups communicate in different ways, and partly in reaction to the form of communication being used and its focus, members of those traditions and groups make decisions about whether or not to take part in the conversation. These differences need to be kept in mind when setting up a conversation that involves people from different religious traditions. Will the conversation work better if structured as an open discussion? a more structured dialogue? a debate or argument? a talking circle? Will the conversation draw the diversity of participants in if focused on events? issues? information? practice? Of course there need not be just one mode or one subject, and there are many options besides those enumerated here.

## **5. Living the truth**

Another problem within traditions and between traditions is that of our approaches to truth:

- At times we make affirmations of truth in ways that lead to argument, divisions, and separations among us.
- Rather than engage in conflict about the truths on which we base our lives, it is often better to live devotedly with the invitation, "Just watch me for a while." A focus on the fruit of how we live can lead to new understanding and appreciation of each other.
- Truth is both individual and communal. It is explored both through religious practice and in the articulation of beliefs and doctrines. What is learned, and communicated to others, through ideas and stories, and what through doing? Both participation (the experiential) and more verbal forms of learning (the intellectual) should be employed in building understanding and community.

## **6. Teachings, change, and challenges**

Issues of authentic teaching and change affect our particular religious traditions and our interrelationships:

- We see a distinct dichotomy between the variety of individual convictions and experiences on the one hand, and, on the other, the range of institutional and scholarly standards of practice and teaching. The extent to which such standards are recognized or ignored differs, depending on the topic or practice in question, and the segment of the community involved. However, relationship to sources of teaching authority is in flux among us all.
- In each of our religious traditions there are many variations on traditional practice, as well as ongoing discussions within the traditions themselves to distinguish between those variations which are part of solid growth and those considered "deviations." We share the need to evaluate such new patterns; to make judgments regarding acceptable limits for faithful behavior, and what innovations can and should be embraced. We also share the need to develop ways of maintaining relationships with those in our own tradition who do or see things in ways very different from the way we do. The renewal of our religious traditions and of communal ties within those traditions is of common concern.
- The number and variety of sources of teaching in our religious traditions have increased dramatically. It is now common for people in our communities to turn to new sources for insight and information (for example, people operating web sites or producing publications or developing institutes are creating new centers from which teaching is offered). Such developments raise questions, and challenges, to established authority. Evaluating the multiplicity of teachers and sources is becoming a serious problem. And their existence raises questions about how to maintain, and make clear, what is central in each of our traditions, and what in each of them is authoritative. We all face these issues. In building interreligious communities, we need to engage our religious institutions and their authority, but we may also need to acknowledge and work with leadership that draws on other sources of validation and energy.

## **7. Handing the tradition to the next generation**

Passing on a living and vital tradition to the generations that come after us is another matter that unites us and one on which we can find insight and help from one another.

### **C. Strategies for living together as friends**

As we talked about the issues above, we discussed different kinds of responses to many of them.

#### **1. A strategy for a common project**

We talked about one very specific model for building mutually supporting interreligious communities, one that is goal oriented and focuses on undertaking a common project. In brief, it involves five steps.

- i. Initially, get the "lay of the land." What is the community like? Who lives there? How does its geographical location affect its life? Who are the leaders? Who controls community resources, and how does the community operate?
- ii. Define the urgent issues based on widely-held priorities, community sensitivities, long and short term needs, and select one or two issues to work on.
- iii. Develop a strategic plan that includes appropriate goals and steps for reaching them, procedures, communication methods and networks, milestones which will demonstrate progress, and other measures of success/failure.
- iv. Plunge in, work faithfully together on the proposed project, make the necessary compromises, and meet the challenges that arise. Be sure that those working together stay connected to share stories, frustrations, updates, encouragement.
- v. Complete and evaluate the project. What has changed? What are the resulting attitudes, realities? What has been accomplished? What remains to be done? Celebrate project completion and appropriate closure.

#### **2. More general strategies**

We also identified more general strategies that can be helpful in addressing divisive issues or problems that arise in the course of building supporting relationships among our religious traditions.

- a.** Recognize that strategies to address issues should vary according to context. Some of us live in a small rural parish or temple, others in large urban areas. The issues will differ, as will the ways of addressing them.

- b.** Recognize that there are many ways of experiencing another's religious tradition: tell stories, invite one another to services and rituals, discuss ideas and practices. Make room for the experiential as well as the intellectual.
- c.** Focus on how a person of faith lives his/her life, rather than engaging in debates or arguments about the truths on which our lives are based.
- d.** Media often ask a religious leader or an interreligious organization, "What is your position on such and such an issue?" When this occurs, one might consider if it would be helpful to show a range of the views existing within a community on the issue, not all of which may be in harmony with one another. One might also consider if it is always necessary to seek (or to have) consensus on issues.
- e.** Get to know one another as people-build relationships first. An initial focus on theological or philosophical issues may bring premature stalemate. It is better to enable personal relationships first. There is a need for institutional relationships, *and* for people to come out of their institutions and get to know each other as people. Personal relationships can be most useful in bringing religious leaders together to solve problems, or in generating a community-wide strategy.
- f.** Maintain noble silence. Sometimes silence is the best policy, especially when there is a lot of anger around a particular issue or situation. However, we are not advising that anyone refrain from speaking out in the face of obvious injustice. We recognize that sometimes issues emerge in an interreligious context that must be dealt with before any other progress can be made.
- g.** Announce each other's events and observances as a concrete way of supporting each other.
- h.** Respect each other, even if you have questions about one another's practices or beliefs. It is always right to discuss issues, and sometimes necessary to raise concerns. But do not encourage disrespectful remarks about another as a person because of her or his religious choices. Engaging in such personal attacks is hurtful and is a form of unfaithfulness.
- i.** Attend to the inter-relationships between religion and culture. Give significant and sufficient attention to a group's cultural practices and their inter-relation with religious observance. Pay attention to family ties within ethnic communities, and how this relates to their religious practice.
- j.** In some cases it may be helpful to put community first, before religious practice-to recognize that we are part of the same community, though we may practice different religions. Especially in cases when the aim is to address a particular community problem, differences in religious belief, styles of prayer, ways of practice, or in positions on divisive issues are much less important than tending to the community in which all live.
- k.** We have noted that in all of our traditions institutional life can become very narrow in its focus on the particularity of our own tradition or branch of a tradition. Programs often focus on building up the life of a particular denomination, sect, or way within a tradition. To foster

mutually supporting relationships among our religious traditions, it will be important to make engaging in a broader community an integral part of the programming of our institutions.

**l.** Make a list of the most common incidents or events that encourage people to enter into interreligious conversation—for instance, when a person of one culture or religion moves into a neighborhood where the majority is of another religion or culture; interfaith marriage; etc. Develop strategies for how you can respond.

**m.** Tailor your approaches to interreligious situations so that they are sensitive to the feelings and mores of the people you are trying to serve.

**n.** Do not be afraid to develop supporting relationships of faith, and to share spiritual support with one another, across lines of religious tradition.

## **V. Conclusion : The Way of Conversation**

Here at the end we return to the method that was briefly introduced earlier, to the way we spent our time together, telling stories about living faithfully in the United States today. Story telling is

### **A. My story in time**

To fix attention on first person stories is not to succumb to the contemporary pathology of selfishness or individualism. The stories that are told in response to the question, "What does it mean to live faithfully in the United States today?" are not cut off from the flow of time. As you recount moments in your life that signal your efforts—successful or unsuccessful—to live faithfully, you are placing those moments within the larger story of your community's life, sometimes across the centuries, sometimes with a focus on the generation of your parents or your grandparents. Sometimes you are even bridging from one part to another of your own story.

Everyone's story is told into a larger story. As we talk about faithful living, we become acutely aware that we are who we are because others before us have made decisions, held on in face of difficulties, been sad and joyous and everything in between. We may not express our faithfulness in exactly the same way as those before us did, but stories can be similar without being identical. To understand this relation between our own story and the larger story, note these remarks: "I would be unfaithful if I stopped being part of the ongoing argument in my own tradition. I do not have to affirm one particular way, but I do have to affirm the searching." "It's about belonging, even more than believing or behaving."

My story gets part of its character from the past. It also is being shaped in the present, and particularly by the stories I am hearing from others. This is something far deeper than simply tailoring what I say to respond to a point another person has made, or to highlight commonalities ("Oh, she spoke of her mother's impact in her own practice of religion. That has been influential for me also, so I should mention it too.") When I hear the stories of others, my language and beliefs are cracked open, my perspectives shift by five or ten or ninety or a hundred and eighty degrees. "We smell perfume we've never smelled before."

When this happens, we realize that our own stories are constantly in motion. "From my experiences of change, change that feels like growth and maturing rather than 'deviating,' I learn that 'getting stuck' is a fundamental unfaithfulness." The story I told about myself before I engaged in conversation with others is different from the one I tell afterwards, and if and when I encounter these people again, all of us will tell yet different stories, though connected to the ones told before. And we see ourselves fresh: "How does my practice look through another's eyes? Does my practice end up excluding people, tying them down, putting them in boxes?" To direct this sharp, critical eye at oneself can be an expression of faithfulness. I may even end up querying my own sense of being excluded by others: "When I feel slighted by someone of another tradition-the situation can be very awkward, I can get caught off guard and feel foolish-it may be that that person doesn't mean what I would mean by the same action."

And my story is linked not only to the past and the present, but also to the future. One of the most profound questions anyone can face in the effort to live faithfully is this: "Will I be able to accept the ways in which my children understand what it is to live faithfully if those ways are different from my own?" There is no feature of the general question of living faithfully in the United States today that more quickly brings together adherents of different religious traditions than this: How can we effectively transmit our tradition to the next generation, "to our children who are trying to negotiate this society"?

It is "like walking through a door, and you don't know what's on the other side." One thing we might find: "We often think we are raising kids, but the truth is that in many ways we are being raised by them." "When they ask tough questions, as they regularly and uncannily do, don't pretend to know more than you do. Let them understand young that the path is difficult." And some people of faith, who are recovering traditional practices that have faded in the American context, are to an extent on their own: "There are few role models today of people who've lived their lives this way." The dynamics of transmission differ widely, depending on, among other things, how long the tradition has been present in this country, but whether it has been here for centuries or has arrived recently, deciding what is erosion, adaptation, assimilation, growth, capitulation, flourishing, or you-name-it, is a puzzle for everyone.

## **B. My story among these stories**

When I tell my story in the company of people whose context is very different from my own-"speak myself into my tradition by telling my story *and* speak myself into a sharing of traditions"-several things happen. I acknowledge that my story is not privileged; it is not the one that sets the standard for anybody else-including the other conversation partners who are adherents of my own tradition. "If I make an absolute claim, it's of a sort that everyone can make, like 'My mother is the best mother.'" Even if my religious tradition has a hierarchical structure (and most of them do), hierarchy does not apply in the realm of conversation. Everybody has a place at this table, and it is a round table. Everyone is valued, no one is silenced. And this means not only that no one can silence me, but also that I cannot silence anyone. We are all vulnerable. And "all the conversation is internal."

Stories dehypnotize us, detoxify us. We all are victims of stereotyping, not only the distorted images others have of us, but also the false images we have of others and of ourselves. "I never

realized before how many prejudices I have about your traditions-including others within my own spiritual family." Stereotypes are appealing because we think they make it easier to thread our way through a complex world. When we tell and listen to stories, however, we are awakened from the hypnotic trance of such simplification, our thinking is cleansed of toxicity. It is as if we filter ourselves through a dream catcher, "which catches all the good stuff and lets the bad things fall through."

### **C. Our stories together**

Some of the deepest connections that are made in conversation occur when words fail us. There are sorrows against which language shatters-"We know from our life and traditions that truth is not only harmonious." There are joys to which language cannot reach. When storytelling spills over into tears or into laughter, it become especially clear that this kind of encounter is different in kind from discussion of doctrines or comparisons of texts. Those activities have their own kind of integrity, and often have a profound impact on the shaping of religious communities, but they are constrained by the limits of language, and living faithfully sometimes cannot be talked about, at least directly. We must guard against too facile a claim that we understand another. "I must go beyond my experience and exercise imagination if I'm to have genuine empathy."

For some persons in the United States, the lack of language is especially painful. It may be unfamiliarity with the language of the scriptures and liturgies. Or it may be the result of cultural oppression when those in authority do not understand or, understanding, do not acknowledge, the needs of the people. "I can't even communicate with my parents' generation. My grandmother passed away without my talking to her. Right after she died, I said, 'Now you can understand me,' and I started talking to her in English." "It will take me a lifetime to get back what was taken from my ancestors." Indeed, we may need to ask ourselves, "How has the fulfilling of the American promise for my community conflicted with its fulfillment for others?" "I must acknowledge the evil religion is capable of, as well as the good." "There's a shadow side. We need to be honest about the ways our communities have hurt each other, America has hurt us, our own communities have hurt us." "There are terrible stories that are part of the tradition that is my home, that I sometimes think I shouldn't be part of, but there's no pure place to go."

The image that comes to mind for many as they engage in story telling is ventilation. Fresh air blows into our minds and hearts. "My eyes became wide open, I began to appreciate everything." "The key idea is to live your faith as you understand it, and understand others' faiths as they practice them." There are specific ideas, new insights, unfamiliar language, but more than any of these, there is a sense of cleansing, of more oxygen, of de-clogging arteries.

There is also a recognition that religious practices are as much a part of the story as are the words in which the story is conveyed, even though "American culture doesn't value commitment to discipline, to spiritual practice." In the sort of encounter we had and recommend to others, members of each tradition perform rituals that the others participate in to the extent possible, and witness beyond the limits of participation. "In the worship, we were able to participate in a personal unfoldment, new to me. I prayed because I understood the mood and the occasion and the environment, even though in some cases I didn't understand the language." The rituals

ground the verbal stories, and the stories told make the rituals easier for everyone to be in the presence of. It turns out that no one is opaque.

#### **D. Character of the stories**

Stories that are told about living faithfully in the United States today are blessedly free of abstractions and jargon. They are candid and concrete, they pay attention to details of time and place and person. They are about "coming home as Americans of faith," stories of "difficulties, tears, storms, and joys, laughter, rainbows." "The stories reveal not the relativity of faith, but its relatability." They often turn the tables on expectation: "Pain has given me joy"; "What has helped me most to live faithfully is also what has posed the biggest threat"; "Rebellion, as well as obedience, is part of religion." When people start talking with each other about these matters, they say things that surprise even themselves. "The lump in the throat is a kind of knowledge."

And it becomes clear that there is not a sharp line between "living faithfully" and simply "living my life." There are certainly depths and heights that resonate between stories, but there is also much of the ordinary, of life-in-the-middle, in what people talk about. The stories are like fractals in mathematics: Just as even a tiny part of a coastline mimics the contours of the whole coast, so a piece of story reflects the whole pattern. And it is my whole story, not just the commonly understood "religious" parts, that constitutes my answer to the question of living faithfully. Faithfulness, it turns out, is not known and lived only at the boundaries, but also in the daily round, the unexciting. Because our ordinary lives are, to an extraordinary extent, the bearers of our faithfulness, we do not worry so much about the traditions and their sustainability. "How have I changed? I worry less."

#### **E. Consequences of our story telling**

Each person's story encourages the others to be more articulate about their own. We are confirmed in our own traditions not by rejecting others, but by seeing the goodness in them. Listening to another often confirms one's own view-while at the same time revealing that such conversation is not a zero-sum game. We do not become religious relativists; we do not become "comparatively religious." And we do not engage in "competitive pain." "I had only encountered these communities in theory-by reading a book or hearing a lecture. Our sufferings are similar-so should be our victories, celebrations, joys." We begin to glimpse answers to these questions: What makes religion alive in this culture? What makes it possible to hang in there? "And we can ponder the way in which our own ancestors in our traditions dealt with the challenges they faced-at the very least, they managed things well enough to make us possible!"

Far from claiming particular "victories" over against others' "defeats," we bind ourselves together and become caretakers of one another's stories, witnesses to the stories of others. We connect at the fundamental level of our humanity with those who are different from us. "I will consider all children as my own children, all men as my brothers, all women as my sisters, and all elders as my own parents." We certainly do not claim to "speak for" others in a preemptive or imperialist way. Rather, we work through a set of questions: Who are we to each other? What is our responsibility-our connection to-the stories of people whose lives have been very unlike our own? What are our communities of accountability? Just our own? or those of others? And if the

latter, what forms does that accountability take? An answer that emerges from conversation: "I want to let the voices of many different kinds of people be heard. I don't speak *for* them. I hope to let them speak *through* me."

This is what it means to be caretakers of each other's stories and witnesses of their lives:

- I have to place myself in situations where I am bound to hear the stories of others;
- I have to listen to their stories with an open heart and a willingness to be changed by them;
- I have to tell their stories in places where they can be heard-and take the risk of telling them, sometimes, in places where they may be thrown back at me;
- I have to tell the stories faithfully-that is, let them come through me as if my friends were speaking for themselves, but I also have to let my hearers know how the stories have changed me-to try to convey what I now know that I did not know before, what I now feel that I did not feel before (or no longer feel or fear), what I now do that I did not do before.

If I become the caretaker of the stories of others, then I can to a small extent become a witness for the realities of their lives-not only their sufferings and their triumphs and their hopes but also of the power of their religious practices and world views, the particular angles they have on human problems, the ways they live out the ethical teachings of their traditions.

People who engage in this sort of conversation become caretakers and witnesses of one another's stories and find that they want to keep in touch with each other. It is important for those of us who have had these conversations to visit each other not just physically but also in our prayers and our thoughts. "I encounter yet another who makes me feel the incompleteness of my being in their absence in my life up to the moment of our encounter." "I have found our laughter to be a mark of who we have become together. It has been not only the sound of us that I have loved, but the sight of us-our faces and our colors, our clothes and our shapes and our sizes-our unlikely, unpredictable, and altogether fitting combinations that are a preview of the future for coming generations." We establish a crucial community of support and celebration, and say to one another, "When I think of you, I will think of the whole world." We could include many more stories that we told each other, but more important than anything additional we could say is what you discover in your own conversations with others about living faithfully. The one "more thing" we will say is something about how our speaking and listening worked.

## **F. First-person discourse and open-ended agendas**

The conversations on which "Living Faithfully in the United States Today" is based took place in August 1999 and August 2000 according to procedures and guidelines that have been developed through a quarter-century of experiment and refinement at the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research. This way of engaging in dialogue has proved, over and over again, to encourage surprise, new images, fresh speech. What emerges from the group is usually quite different from any particular idea or formulation that someone brought into the discussion.

While these guidelines and procedures are designed specifically for the Institute's gatherings that extend over a period of several days, they can be adapted for many other contexts and time-frames. Anyone who is organizing an interreligious conversation can find creative ways to use first-person discourse and open-ended agendas for the sake of breakthrough.

A key element of the Institute's method is to begin with stories. Each participant is given twenty minutes to respond autobiographically to the initial question. The question needs to be significant and specific, e.g., "When in your experience of living in the United States has it been very difficult to be faithful to your religious tradition, and when has living in the United States especially aided you in being faithful to your religious tradition?" There are certainly many appropriate opening questions for an interreligious conversation, but what is asked needs to be directed to the personal (in this case, "your experience," not "How has your tradition found American culture difficult/easy to live in?"). A soft bell or some unobtrusive signal tells the speaker that the twenty minutes is about up.

Immediately following the story, the only questions permitted are ones absolutely necessary for clarification. Then another participant gets twenty minutes. And so on, until all the stories have been told. It is they-the stories-that become the source material for the subsequent conversation in the entire group, in smaller groups, and in periods of individual reflection and writing. But do not skimp on the time for story telling and listening. The way of conversation is the way forward.

- Conversation and discussion are in the first person. One's own experience and ideas, which may include the owning of others' ideas and insights, are the touchstone for what is said. Participants say what they think and carefully listen to what others say.
- Everyone has an equal right to participate, to disagree, and/or to pass. There should be no put-downs, no hurting of others or of oneself. Everyone is responsible for helping to create a safe atmosphere.
- A detailed agenda is not prescribed in advance, and even if there is an outline of procedure, it is subject to revision in light of the direction discussion takes. Facilitators are responsible for seeing that no participant dominates the conversation or has undue influence in determining the agenda.
- No formal papers are presented. Normally a consultation will operate in three modes, in a mix to be determined as the discussion develops: plenary meetings; small group meetings; individual writing.
- Provision is made for ample free time.
- Except with approval of facilitators, participants are expected to be present for the entire stated duration of a consultation.
- No attempt is made to determine in advance what the specific outcome of a consultation will be. The form of this communication, during the course of and/or at the conclusion of a particular project, is determined within the conversation process itself.

### **Appendix : Participants in the Conversation**

**Shahid Athar**  
**Indianapolis, Indiana**

**Mary Farrell Bednarowski**  
**Minneapolis, Minnesota**

**John Borelli**  
**Washington, DC**

**Minerva G. Carcaño**  
**Dallas, Texas**

**Sriwan Chan**  
**Sugar Land, Texas**

**Jerome A. Chanes**  
**New York, New York**

**Barry D. Cytron**  
**Saint Paul, Minnesota**

**Fawaz Damra**  
**Strongsville, Ohio**

**Anuttama Dasa**  
**Potomac, Maryland**

**Tee Garlington**  
**Atlanta, Georgia**

**Shuchita Goel**  
**Eatonton, Georgia**

**Patrick Henry**  
**Collegeville, Minnesota**

**Daniel Hoffman**  
**Indianapolis, Indiana**

**Nahid S. Khan**  
**Brooklyn Center, Minnesota**

**Koyo S. Kubose**  
**Skokie, Illinois**

**Tamah Kushner**  
**Redondo Beach, California**

**Don Morreale**  
**Denver, Colorado**

**Raj Nagarajan**  
**Rockville, Maryland**

**Wendy Egyoku Nakao**  
**Los Angeles, California**

**Jay T. Rock**  
**New York, New York**

**Ned Rosenbaum**  
**Boston, Kentucky**

**Ronald B. Shaheed**  
**Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

**Arunima Sinha**  
**Columbia, South Carolina**

**Jaimie Snowdon**  
**Fargo, North Dakota**

**Ernest Tsosie**  
**Window Rock, Arizona**

**Deborah Waxman**  
**Wyncote, Pennsylvania**