

*Just*FAITH  
*Just*Matters



**In the Spirit of St. Francis and the Sultan**  
**Muslims and Christians Working Together for the Common Good**

**Participant Packet**

**(Deacon) George Dardess, PhD**  
**Consultant on Interfaith Affairs and Migrant Ministry**  
**Roman Catholic Diocese**  
**Rochester, NY**

*and*  
**Marvin L. Mich S.T.D.,**  
**Director of Social Policy**  
**Catholic Family Center**  
**Diocese of Rochester, NY**

**JustFaith Ministries**  
**P.O. Box 221348**  
**Louisville, KY 40252**  
**[www.justfaith.org](http://www.justfaith.org)**  
**[mary@justfaith.org](mailto:mary@justfaith.org)**

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# JustFAITH JustMatters

## In the Spirit of St. Francis and the Sultan

### Table of Contents

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Page</b>
Welcome and General Comments-----	3-9
Session One Material (Finding Common Ground) -----	10-13
Session Two Material (Common Prayers as a Point of Entry) -----	14-20
Session Three Material (Fundamentals of Christian Social Justice) -----	21-28
Session Four Material (Fundamentals of Islamic Social Justice) -----	29-37
Session Five Material (Christians and Muslims Today) -----	38-43
Session Six Material (Facing Demons and Challenges) -----	44-52
Session Seven Material (Common Ground. Common Action) -----	53-56
Session Eight Material (Leaving the Tent. The Land Ahead) -----	57-60
Session Nine Gathering (Meeting After the Action) -----	61
JustFaith Ministries Information-----	62-64

**Link to online Evaluation (Complete only after you have finished Session Eight):**

<http://justfaith.org/JustMatters/Evaluations/stfrancisandthesultan.html>



# JustMATTERS *Just* FAITH

**\*\* Participants are to bring this Packet to each session. \*\***

## **General Comments**

Welcome to the JustFaith Ministries JustMatters module, *In the Spirit of St. Francis and the Sultan*. We are grateful for your willingness to participate in this module. Bringing Christians and Muslims together to work for the common good will be challenging given the prejudice against Muslims that has been growing since the tragic events of September 11, 2001. (The Council on American-Islamic Relations or CAIR tracks evidence of this growing prejudice. Check their website at [www.cair.com](http://www.cair.com).) Yet, neither Christians nor Muslims have any basis for submitting to this prejudice, Muslims to suffer it or Christians to be party to it. Both their faiths explicitly call them to act vigorously against all forms of prejudice. Muslims and Christians cannot do otherwise if they are to fulfill the two commandments God has enjoined on them, both to love God and to love the neighbor.

The module will require that everyone make a strong commitment to the skills of dialogue and active listening. Those skills will be in demand in every session, but perhaps especially so in session six, which directly addresses the current climate of anti-Muslim sentiment, as that climate is shaped by media and political interests. None of us, whether Christian or Muslim, can claim to have been unaffected by such influence.

You should not look to your facilitator as an expert on this topic; rather, s/he will be a learner just as you are. S/he has just graciously taken on the role of facilitator so that the module process could happen. Everyone will experience the process of deepening their awareness of the Christian or Muslim “other.” Also, as with all JustFaith Ministries programs, this module is not intended to be an exhaustive, factual analysis of an issue or, in this case, of Muslim-Christian similarities and differences. Rather, it is more of an immersion into the faith dynamic that will allow Muslims and Christians to work effectively and joyfully together for the common good.

## **The Sessions’ Symbols and their Story**

Below, in concise form, is the arrangement of symbols used sequentially in the ceremonies beginning and ending each of the eight sessions of the JustFaith Ministries JustMatters module you are about to embark on. The eight symbols correspond to and enhance the particular focus of each of the eight sessions.

The symbols, taken together, also tell a story. The story speaks of a community of pilgrims setting forth on a journey towards shalom, salaam, fullness of life. Previously



strangers to each other, and to a greater or lesser degree alienated from each other by a centuries-long history of mutual mistrust and conflict, the pilgrims nevertheless decide to overcome the barriers separating them and to walk along the pilgrim road together. What inspires them to take this unprecedented step is their growing understanding that, despite all their differences, they share a deeper allegiance to the same prophetic command: that they are to love God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength and their neighbor as themselves. This new understanding opens the pilgrims to the further insight that they are more likely to reach the shalom they both seek if they walk together than if they continue separately.

Helping this new hybrid community of pilgrims to live in creative tension with their similarities and differences are the common symbols of their respective faiths. The symbols enable them to tell their common story and to point them as one community towards their common goal.

The symbols are:

- 1) Way (Path)
- 2) Book (Message)
- 3) Light
- 4) Water
- 5) Posture
- 6) Space and Time
- 7) Meal
- 8) Way — a reprise

The story the symbols tell runs something like this:

The story begins with **Way** because the pilgrims are traveling on a Path, as a people walking together, in community, towards a destination.

The **Book** or Message informs the pilgrims' understanding of their goal and strengthens their will to arrive there.

The pilgrims walk on the Way with sure steps thanks to the **Light**, which keeps them from straying or forgetting or falling, and which warms them and attracts them to its beauty.

**Water**, like Light, helps the pilgrims maintain their progress along the way, in particular by cleansing them of the dust of attachment, inaction, lack of zeal, or of zeal for the wrong things.

The symbol of **Space and Time** enables the pilgrims to orient themselves both with respect to God's good creation as well as to the promised fulfillment of created life in the world to come.

**Posture** disciplines pilgrims' bodies to conform to their hopes, just as their minds and wills and hearts have been disciplined through attention to previous symbols.

In **Meal**, the pilgrims find nourishment for the journey and share a foretaste of their promised full unity with each other and with God.

The pilgrims reprise the symbol of **Way** both in order to draw encouragement from noting how far they've already come as well as to measure the challenges of the new territory that now lies open before them.

### **How the Sessions' Symbols Affect You**

The pilgrims in the story are of course yourselves: a group of Muslims and Christians moved to carry out together your common mandate to love God and neighbor.

**Way** is accordingly the symbol for session **one** because it encourages all of you, Christians and Muslims alike, to value the opportunity of joining forces in the pilgrimage towards a common goal.

**Book** becomes the symbol for session **two** because it opens you to experience the similarities and differences between your respective scriptures, the sources of your guidance and prayer.

**Light** is the symbol for session **three** for by it you will begin to see clearly each other's common grounding in social justice.

**Water** is the symbol for session **four**, washing away any remaining fears that your gathering on the common ground of social justice is not also a gathering on sacred ground.

**Space & Time** is the symbol for session **five**. The **symbol** reminds you of the importance of orientation to God's presence in creation and allows you to see that concrete, physical action for the common good is the natural expression of a community formed in faith.

**Posture** is the symbol for session **six**, because the disciplining of body, mind, and spirit will help you overcome the spell put upon you by the idols of tribalism and exclusion.

In **Meal**, the symbol for session **seven**, you taste the goal of all work for the common good: fulfillment and celebration.

Returning to the symbol of the **Way** for session **eight**, you will look back to trace your footsteps during the past seven sessions, noting where they diverged and converged, and you will look ahead together as you walk as one community to pick up the fallen, bearing them with you on the path to the Heavenly Banquet.

### **A Note on "Gendered" Language for God**

You will note that throughout the written materials for this JustMatters module we use capitalized forms of the masculine pronoun (He, Him, His) when referring to God. We do this in deference to Muslim custom and belief. The equivalent of the name "God" in Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, is Allah, a noun considered masculine only in grammatical form, not in gender. Allah (God) is beyond gender and beyond even being, because Allah (God) is the Creator of gender and being. Accordingly, Muslims strictly avoid all gendered language for God. For example, Muslims do not call God "Father." To use such a name would, according to Muslim belief, detract from God's absolute majesty. Capitalizing the masculine pronouns used for God ("He" rather than "he") highlights that majesty.



So when Muslims among the Module's participants call God "He," they are not saying that God is male. They are setting God apart from both maleness and femaleness. Yet even with this explanation Christian participants who are sensitive to patriarchal or misogynist uses of the pronoun "He" when used of God may still feel uncomfortable. What to do?

The healthy way for you all to approach this discomfort, should it arise among Christian participants, is to talk about it! Perhaps you will find yourselves coming to an agreement about using some other alternative word for God — perhaps "Allah," which is after all merely the Arabic word for "God." Or perhaps you'll find it easier simply to repeat the (English) name of God in places where a pronoun would otherwise occur. Working out a common parlance for referring to God could be a very instructive exercise in itself.

## **Visits to Each Others' Places of Worship**

### ***Planning the Visits: Which Church? Which Mosque?***

We urge you all to begin planning without delay for your visits to each other's places of worship. There should be at least two such visits, one to a local mosque, one to a local church. Of course, if this JustMatters session were a longer one, more such visits could be planned. Just as no two mosques are the same, so also are no two Christian churches the same. Mosques and churches are after all no more nor less than gatherings of the faithful. A particular gathering's ethnic and cultural characteristics will influence the tone of the service, and while Christian worship practices differ far more greatly among themselves than Muslim ones do, there can still be slight differences even in Muslim practice, depending on cultural factors or on whether the group identifies itself as Sunni or Shi'a.

So to choose one particular gathering for their colleagues to visit will be a challenge for both Muslims and Christians, though the Christians will face the bigger dilemma. For example: Since there will almost certainly be time for their Muslim friends to visit only one Christian church, should that church be a liturgical church (Catholic, Orthodox, Episcopalian, Lutheran)? Or should it be a non-liturgical one, say, a mainline Baptist or Presbyterian church? Or an evangelical church or a Pentecostal church? And should the chosen church represent a particular spiritual, or even political orientation? Should it be a conservative church, or a progressive one, or middle-of-the-road?

Probably the best way out of this dilemma is to go with familiarity and convenience. On that basis, the Christian members can choose a church at least one of them attends. Planning can be focused on that church and its worship practices *while at the same time including information about how different Christian worship would look and feel in other settings*. Perhaps there may even be time to insert a visit to one of those other churches. But more likely a visit to one church will have to serve as a visit to all.

### ***The Church Visit***

Once the church is chosen, the Christians should not delay in making contact with the church's staff in order to make the necessary arrangements for date, time, hospitality, etc.



(The Christian member who attends the chosen church would be point person for all such arrangements.) Included among the preparations should be readying the church community for a visit by a small group of Muslims. Sadly, given the current upsurge of Islamophobia, one can't assume that this news will be greeted with universal enthusiasm. The Christian group members, in conjunction with the church's leaders, will need to anticipate possible objections and at least soften them. An announcement about the visit should be made on the Sunday prior to the visit and should be printed in the church bulletin. The key point would be to emphasize that the visit will be a learning opportunity for everyone.

The visit itself should include:

- *Gathering at the church:* welcome by the church staff; introductions; walk-through of the worship space; brief explanation of the service soon to be observed.
- *The service itself:* The Muslim guests should be comfortably seated in a part of the church where they can observe the service without obstruction; the pastor should welcome the entire JustFaith group at the beginning of the service and explain to the congregation the purpose of their visit; prayers for the success of the JustFaith group's efforts should be included among the petitions; at the conclusion of the service the pastor should thank the guests for their presence; the pastor should invite the guests to gather with the congregation for hospitality and Q&A.
- *Gathering afterwards:* hospitality (beverages, refreshments), to which the worshiping community is cordially invited; a brief presentation by a church staffperson on the particular characteristics of the worship the members of the group have just observed, as contrasted with practices of other Christian communities; Q&A in which everyone is invited to participate.

Since the Q&A is open to everyone, the Muslims present are very likely to find themselves questioned about Islam. The Christian JustMatters participants may well find themselves being questioned as well, about the reason for their association with Muslims. The questions will probably be well-meaning, but again, because of the heightened climate of anti-Muslim suspicion, some questions may have an edge. JustMatters participants, whether Muslim or Christian, shouldn't be surprised or offended if such an edge emerges. Rather, you should see the attention, even if tainted by suspicion, as an opportunity to present yourselves as a community in solidarity with each other and with all humankind. In other words, your public demonstration of unity of purpose in such situations is exactly the message you are trying to establish through your JustMatters commitment. Your ability to handle such questioning calmly and knowledgeably and in concert with each other is a key strength the JustMatters curriculum is designed to develop.

### ***The Mosque Visit***

Everything said above about the Church visit applies to the Mosque visit, with these differences:





- Because Jum'a (Friday) gathering takes place during midday on Friday, arranging for the entire JustMatters group to be free at that time may take some creative rearranging of schedules. If a visit to the Friday prayer proves impossible, then members should seek out an evening prayer time convenient to all.
- Since Muslim prayer is conducted in Arabic, Muslim members should explain to their Christian colleagues once they gather at the mosque the meaning of the words they will soon be hearing, both in the Adhan (call to worship) and during Salat (public prayer) itself. A hand-out with the words in English and in Arabic transliteration would be useful. Try to schedule this visit after Session Two. That way, the Christian members will already be familiar with the Fatihah, the Muslim equivalent to the Lord's Prayer and a prayer frequently recited during Salat. Muslim members will also need to explain the purpose of the postures assumed during prayer. (This information will be reinforced in the ceremony beginning Session Six.)
- In the Q&A afterwards, Christians may experience some tension from their Muslim hosts. The reason for this (if it should occur) is the same as the one that might cause similar tension from some Christians during the church visit: the destructive effects of the current upsurge of Islamophobia. As a result of this upsurge, fear has been sown in both communities nationwide. The Christian members should not be surprised at or feel offended by this phenomenon, but, as mentioned above in the case of the church visit, take advantage of the opportunity to reinforce the message of solidarity that is at the heart of their JustMatters commitment. Learning to deal creatively and non-violently with prejudice is a key part of what the group's effort together is all about.

### **Debriefing the Visits**

We have provided a block of time in Session Five for you to debrief your visits to the mosque/church. You may be tempted to move this block of time either to later or earlier sessions, so as to be able to discuss your experiences as soon after the visits as possible. We urge you to be careful before taking that step. Keep in mind that we have tried hard to write the curriculum in a sequential way. Moving parts of it around will probably mean that other parts will be short-changed: either they'll suffer from lack of context or preparation or they'll be dropped altogether. It is better to consider that a delay in the debriefing might actually help you think about the experience more fully than you otherwise would have. Also, it would be good for participants to do some journaling after the visits and then use these reflections for the debriefing in Session Five.

Questions for the debriefing, whether of the mosque or the church visit, are provided in this document (page 41).

### ***Timing of the Visits within the JustMatters Curriculum***

The two visits should be finished in the early weeks of the module so that discussion can occur in Session Five. We have planned the curriculum accordingly. If you run up against unavoidable delays in executing the visits, you would probably do better to delay the next

session than to try to rearrange the curriculum for sessions six through eight to accommodate a postponed visit.

### **Evaluations**

JustFaith Ministries provides an online *participant* evaluation, which is very helpful to the ongoing development of modules in the JustMatters program. Doing the evaluations online saves paper and time and allows the JustFaith Ministries staff to analyze the responses more effectively. Also, the online evaluations are easy to complete and should not take more than fifteen minutes. These online evaluations can be accessed at: <http://justfaith.org/JustMatters/Evaluations/stfrancisandthesultan.html>.

**Thank you for your commitment to this JustFaith Ministries  
JustMatters module and to this topic!**



## SESSION ONE

### *Opening Ceremony*

*The group's Muslims stand on one side of the facilitator, Christians on the other. The facilitator asks for two volunteers, one from among the Muslims and one from among the Christians, to be readers.*

The facilitator goes forward to light the candle, returns, then, facing the table, says:

**We come together, Muslims and Christians, both in eagerness and in constraint: eager to know how we might fulfill God's command that we love Him and love our neighbor but constrained by our differences.**

Muslim reader:

**We are divided by theology.**

Christian reader:

**We are divided by history.**

Muslim reader:

**Yet God calls us together, so that we might all grow more deeply in holiness. Listen to the Qur'an: "We have made you different, we have made you male and female, we have made you different tribes and nations, so that you might come to intimate knowledge of each other; the most generous of you in God's eyes are those most God-conscious; for God is all knowing, most wise." (Sura al-Hujuraat 49:13)**

Christian reader:

**Yes, God calls us together, so that we can become one in Him. Listen to the New Testament: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it." (Ephesians 2:13-16 NRSV)**

Muslim reader:

**We experience attraction to each other, but we experience reserve as well.**

Christian reader:

**We yearn to be one, yet our differences are real.**



Muslim reader:

**Will we become baffled or frustrated by what seem contradictions between attraction and reserve, similarity and difference?**

Christian reader:

**Perpetually pulled forward yet perpetually pushed back?**

Facilitator:

**Or can we trust in the image of the PATH to help us move through the seeming contradiction of similarity and difference towards the light?**

Muslim reader:

**We Muslims ask God to “lead us along the straight path.”**

Christian reader:

**We Christians cherish the words of the twenty-third psalm which say: “He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.”**

Facilitator:

**Let us walk forward together along the path to the light in confidence that God walks with us and will help us accomplish our goal of loving Him and our neighbor. We ask for no greater unity than that.**

All Muslims:

**Amin.**

All Christians:

**Amen.**

The facilitator leads the way towards the lighted candle on the table across the symbolic pathway. The Muslims and Christians fall in step behind him/her, alternating Muslim and Christian. The facilitator stops in front of the candle while the group behind him/her form a semicircle from right to left, alternating Muslim-Christian, all facing the lighted candle.

Facilitator: (after pause)

**We stand before another powerful symbol of both our faiths, a light, and before the holy scriptures given us by God for our guidance. Let us silently ask God’s help that our work together during the coming weeks will enable us to do God’s will more faithfully. And let us also pray that God will give us guidance in knowing whether and how we might someday pray to Him together, in one voice.**

All:

**Amin/Amen.**

The facilitator puts out the candle. Participants return to their seats.



## SESSION ONE

### Group Guidelines

- God has created each of us uniquely, and I recognize that everyone comes to this experience with very different backgrounds, experiences and views. I commit to **honoring differences**, knowing they add to the richness of the group's experience.
- God frequently speaks through the unfamiliar and different. I will **listen intently** in order to fully understand different points of view.
- Listening is an act of love and care. I will **practice sacred listening** and listen with respect (i.e., no side conversations, no interruptions).
- How I treat another person is much more important than my opinions and perspectives. I recognize that we are looking for truthful insights within potentially different views. I will **respectfully seek clarification** of other perspectives to add to my understanding. If I choose to disagree with a perspective that is different from mine, I will do this respectfully and lovingly.
- Because God made us, all persons are of equal importance and value, and all voices are important. I commit to assuring that **everyone has an opportunity to speak**, and I will encourage others to speak before I speak again.
- God has given each of us gifts that are given in the hope and expectation that these gifts will be shared. I will **participate fully**, share in the responsibility for the group's process and experience, and commit to faithful attendance and doing the assignments and readings.
- Trust and respect must be offered as the terms of being together in this journey of faith. I will honor that everything that is shared within this group is to stay within this group.

*(Please reflect on these guidelines so that you will know which of them will be easiest and which might be difficult for you to abide by.)*



## SESSION ONE

### *Closing Ceremony*

*Participants sit in a semicircle, alternating Muslim and Christian. The Muslim and Christian volunteer readers are assigned.*

Facilitator:

**Where did we start from this evening?**

Muslim reader:

**We started from our own separate understanding of God.**

Christian reader:

**We started from our own separate understanding of our common history.**

Facilitator:

**And where did our path this evening take us?**

Muslim reader:

**It took us to a place where we could share some food and hopes and dreams.**

Christian reader:

**Where we could begin to know each other as creations of the One God.**

Facilitator:

**We have come far enough for one evening. Let us leave together along the same path we came in on, confident that God is guiding us step by step towards the goal we both most deeply seek, to love Him with our whole heart and our neighbor as ourselves.**

Muslims:

**Amin.**

Christians:

**Amen.**

The participants file out along the symbolic path in the order along which they entered during the Opening Ceremony. The facilitator is last in line.



## SESSION TWO

### *Opening Ceremony*

*Everyone sits quietly for a moment in chairs facing the table. Parts for the two readers should be assigned beforehand.*

After the pause, the facilitator begins:

**We come together for our second session under the symbol of the Book.**

Muslim reader:

**According to our Qur'an, Christians and Muslims, along with their Jewish brothers and sisters, are equally "People of the Book."**

Christian reader:

**We have all received one Book, or Message: to love God and neighbor.**

Muslim reader:

**Common symbol**

Christian reader:

**Common understanding**

Muslim reader:

**Yet while the particular Books through which that Message has been conveyed to us, the Qur'an and the Bible, look the same physically, they are very different.**

Christian reader:

**For us Christians, the main vehicle of God's Word is Christ Himself. We believe that that Word becomes present to us through the Holy Spirit as we read our Bible reverently.**

Muslim reader:

**For us Muslims, the main vehicle of God's Word is the Holy Book, the Qur'an itself, because through it God chose to send down that Word through the angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing on him).**

Christian reader:

**We believe our Bible to be have been inspired by God in the hearts of those who composed and wrote down its words.**

Muslim reader:

**We believe that the Qur'an contains God's very words, in the Arabic language, and for that reason cannot be translated.**



Christian reader:

**Our Bible, originally written in Hebrew and Greek, has been translated into all the languages of earth, without lessening its power as a vehicle of the Holy Spirit.**

Muslim reader:

**Two books, the Qur'an and the Bible— similar objects physically, but very differently regarded and revered through the eyes of our two different faiths.**

Christian reader:

**Yet both Books convey the same message, that we are to love God and neighbor.**

Muslim reader:

**And both urge us, in different ways, to act on that message.**

Facilitator:

**Let us open our Books and place them before us, Muslims and Christians confident that holy guidance flows from them both, to enable us to know God's will for us, in this session and in the ones to come.**

The Muslim and Christian readers approach the table, open their respective Books reverently, and place them carefully back in the book holder so that the pages remain open throughout the session.

They return to their seats. After a pause for reflection, one of them gets up, puts out the candle, and the session begins.





## SESSION TWO

### Common Prayer

*A note to Participants:*

Here is a sample prayer that might be used after the Closing Ceremony of Session Three and all subsequent Sessions. As you read over the prayer in preparation for Session Three, make any changes you think are necessary. There will be time at the beginning of Session Three for the whole group to discuss the possible use of this prayer or of an adaptation to be agreed upon mutually. Alternatively, the group may decide not to use this or any common prayer at all. In that case, Session Three would conclude with the Closing Ceremony.

God,  
through whom we move and live and have our being,  
We, members of Your Muslim and Christian families,  
Ask you that you guide our steps  
As we strive to become one community  
Dedicated to loving You and our neighbor  
In solidarity with each other,  
Yet always aware of our differences.  
Help us remain in faithful and creative tension,  
Respecting those differences,  
Yet eager to see in them not barriers  
But invitations to help bring about a fuller Salaam  
For ourselves and for the rest of Your creation:  
A Salaam beyond our grasp and understanding at present  
But one day to be revealed to us  
Through Your mercy and love for us all.

We ask this in Your holy Name:  
Allah, as given to us Muslims,  
Jesus Christ, as given to us Christians.

Amen, Amin.



## SESSION TWO

### The Fatihah in Arabic

Regardless of the language they speak at home, all Muslims pray the Fatihah, the first Sura (similar to a chapter) of the Qur'an, in Arabic. That is because the Qur'an itself was, according to Muslim belief, delivered in the Arabic language to the Prophet Muhammad by the angel Gabriel beginning in 610 CE. Accordingly, the Arabic Qur'an contains the unadulterated presence of God in human speech. All Muslim worship must be conducted in the same Arabic language in order to assure fidelity to the initial revelation.

A corollary of Muslim belief in the divine origin of the Qur'an's Arabic is the certainty that the Qur'an cannot be translated into other languages (where translation might imply an equivalence between the Arabic text and one in another language). Muslims refer to renderings of the Qur'an in other languages as "versions" or "interpretations," to emphasize their secondary and derivative status.

As the first Sura of the Qur'an, the Fatihah (which means "opening" in Arabic) enjoys a special pride of place. In addition, its form is unusual among the Suras (which number 114 in all). Whereas all the other Suras contain God's voice, and God's voice alone, the Fatihah is cast as a prayer for the community to say. In length, form, and content it closely resembles the Christian Lord's Prayer. It resembles the Lord's Prayer in intention as well. Both prayers, the Fatihah and the Lord's Prayer, are God's merciful gifts to His human creation, gifts that enable them to pray to God as God desires them to pray. (Participants should refer to pp. 60-63 of Chapter Two to refresh their memories of the similarities and differences between the two prayers.)

For Muslims, the Arabic Qur'an is an utterance unparalleled in power and beauty. Accordingly, Christian members need to gain some feeling for the power of the Fatihah in its true and original Arabic form. Otherwise, they cannot fully know why the Qur'an is so cherished by their Muslim colleagues. This is not as high a hurdle as it may sound. In fact, the Christian members' need provides a golden opportunity for Muslim members of the group to help them. In other sessions, it will be the Christian members who will be doing the teaching. Such mutual sharing in the joys and responsibilities of teaching and listening is what we mean by adult-centered learning.

Using the above as background, the Muslims who prepared for this session will be asked to lead the group through the following process:

- First, Muslims help Christians correlate the English version of the Fatihah found on p. 60 of the *In the Spirit of St. Francis and the Sultan* text with the transliterated version of the Fatihah prepared prior to Session Two and copied in sufficient quantities by the Muslim volunteer.
- Muslim members pronounce the Arabic words and explain their meanings.



- Ask the Christian members to silently read the English version, while at the same time keeping their eye on the Arabic transliteration, as one of the Muslim members chants the whole prayer, slowly and clearly.
- Afterwards, the Muslims should encourage the Christian members to pronounce the Arabic themselves, using the transliterated English version as a guide.
- Close with a playing of a famous Qari (reciter) whose rendition of the Fatihah the Muslims brought to this session. (Hopefully, Christian members will be encouraged to surmount any feelings (especially of fear) they may have imbibed about the “strange” or even “dangerous” sound of Qur’anic chanting and begin to hear how beautiful Qur’anic Arabic can be.)



## SESSION TWO

### DVD Discussion

*NOTE: From Session Two through Session Six, we are providing all participants, in advance, the discussion questions relating to the DVDs you will be watching and discussing during these Sessions. These questions are provided in advance so you can be alert for certain themes before viewing the DVDs.*

#### Pre-DVD Large Group Discussion

Participants are invited to share briefly how each faith community expresses its commitment to “love of neighbor” and to be of service to others. Briefly describe some of the outreach ministry to the poor and vulnerable from your parish or congregation.

#### Post DVD Large Group Discussion

The Christian participants are invited to respond to the message of the DVD. They may wish to comment on something related to these questions:

1. How do you see the link between worship and love of neighbor? What is the connection between the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist and the works of charity and justice?
2. What is the importance of Luke 4:18 (where Jesus announces good news to the poor, liberty to captives, and sight to the blind) in the preaching, teaching and ministry of the church?
3. Give an example of the works of charity and of the ministries of advocacy and community organizing your churches are involved in.
4. Why does the DVD and the bishops’ document *Communities of Salt and Light* stress the importance of living the Gospel and the values of Catholic social teaching in the family, in our workplaces, and as citizens?
5. Discuss Father Burkhardt’s statement that “our parish is the world.”



## SESSION TWO

### *Closing Ceremony*

*Once again the facilitator and the Muslim and Christian participants gather in front of the table. They take their seats as the facilitator relights the candle. The Muslim and Christian volunteer readers (the same ones as before) have their scripts.*

After a pause for reflection of about a minute, the facilitator begins:

**Where did the Books, the Qur'an and the Bible, guide us this evening?**

Muslim reader:

**They guided us to the prayers God gave us as models, to the Lord's Prayer and to the Fatihah.**

Christian reader:

**And to the question whether we could ever pray those prayers or any prayer together, as a community of faith.**

Facilitator:

**And did the Books resolve that question for you?**

Muslim reader:

**They did not resolve the question, but they opened up for us both the joy of addressing the question together, fully and reverently.**

Christian reader:

**And in ways that do not blur the real differences between us while at the same strengthening our common goal of loving God and neighbor in concrete acts of solidarity.**

Facilitator:

**We have come far enough for one evening. Let us close our Books for now, confident that God is guiding us step by step towards the goal we both most deeply seek, to love Him with our whole heart and our neighbor as ourselves.**

Muslims:

**Amin.**

Christians:

**Amen.**

After a pause, the Muslim and Christian readers rise, go up to the table, close their respective books, and replace them on their stands. One of them blows out the candle.



## SESSION THREE

### *Opening Ceremony*

*Everyone sits quietly for a minute in chairs facing the table.*

After the pause, the facilitator begins:

**We come together for our third session under the symbol of Light.**

At a cue from the facilitator, the Muslim and the Christian approach the table, each taking one of the smaller candles and, together, lighting their candles from the large candle already lit. Each, moving together, places his/her lit candle alongside his/her respective Scripture. They resume their seats.

Muslim reader:

**We worship God as the source of Light.**

Christian reader:

**Light that illuminates our minds and animates our souls.**

Muslim reader:

**Common symbol.**

Christian reader:

**Common understanding.**

Muslim reader:

**According to our Qur'an, Light is a transcendent attribute of God, for as our beloved Light Verse says, "God is the Light of heaven and earth."**

Christian reader:

**Yet according to the Gospel of John, Light is more than an attribute of God. God is Light itself, in Christ, who is "the Light shining in the darkness."**

Muslim reader:

**Two lights, lit from the same source, apparently identical to the eye, yet very different.**

Christian reader:

**Two very different understandings of God deeply affect the way we understand our common symbols.**

Muslim reader:

**Yet neither of us can understand God fully. Our Qur'an says, "Human vision cannot capture God, but God captures human vision."**



Christian reader:

**And the First Letter of John says, “No one has seen God.”**

Muslim reader:

**Our common symbol of Light points to a reality beyond our grasp.**

Christian reader:

**Yet the symbol of Light also orients us in our present time and place, directing both our faces even here and now, even in the midst of war and prejudice, towards God’s beauty and glory, the source and stimulus of human enlightenment and spiritual flourishing.**

Muslim reader:

**A Light pointing towards a flourishing that embraces us all.**

Christian reader:

**Rather than towards a darkness that divides us.**

Muslim reader:

**A Light that in God’s time will illuminate even our differences.**

Christian reader:

**A Light even brighter than the Light that shines brightly even now.**

Facilitator:

**Let us walk together now towards that Light, confident that by pursuing the common good God will not lead us back into darkness but will instead bring us into the Salaam prepared for all those who sincerely love God and neighbor.**

Muslims:

**Amin.**

Christians:

**Amen.**

After a minute of silence, the Muslim and Christian who previously lit and set out the two small candles, go up together to the table and extinguish his/her respective candle. Then both extinguish together the large candle.



## SESSION THREE

### An Introduction to the Christian Bible

#### *Christian Participants Teach their Muslim Colleagues*

Christian participants can breathe a sigh of relief. With only 25 minutes to work in, you can't be expected to go into an exposition of the Christian Bible in any kind of detail. What you can do, though, is give a brief description of the Bible. At the same time you can indicate the way in which the majority of Christians understand the Bible, i.e. not as God's literal words but rather the words of people inspired over the ages by the Holy Spirit. This presentation should take no longer than 10 minutes. That leaves 15 minutes for Q&A. Remember that Q&A is where true learning is most likely to happen!

#### **Procedure:**

The group's Christians should first read over the following background material. Then they should decide together, through phoning or e-mailing outside of class and before Session Three, how they want to divide up responsibility for the presentation itself. They should also remind each other to bring from home different translations of the Bible, whatever they may happen to have at home. Try to make sure that this variety contains at least one Catholic Bible (for example: the New American Bible) and one or more different Bible translations used by Protestant denominations, including the King James version and the Revised Standard Version.

#### *Background on Muslims' understanding of the Bible*

The great majority of Muslims, unless they are converts from Christianity, have never opened up a Bible. That doesn't mean they don't have a strong opinion about it, and an ambivalent one at that. Here's why. On the one hand, the Qur'an asserts that both the Torah and the Good News (*evangelium* or, in Arabic, *injl*) are identical to the Qur'an in carrying the same message (the commandment to love God and neighbor). The only difference, according to the Qur'an, is that the Torah was sent by God through the prophet Moses to the Jewish people, while the Good News was sent by God through the prophet Jesus to the Nazarenes or Christians. The Qur'an is the same message delivered by the prophet Muhammad to the Arabs.

But the Qur'an also asserts that both messages, Torah and Good News, were corrupted subsequent to their revelation to Moses and Jesus by certain Jews who claimed the message only for their own group (the "Chosen People") and by certain Christians who claimed that the prophet Jesus was God's Son. In other words, what Jews call the "Torah" and Christians call the "Gospel" are adulterated texts. This point is made in the book, *In the Spirit of St. Francis and the Sultan*. We are only reminding you of it.

**Remember that the goal of this presentation, as well as your Muslim colleagues' presentation of the Qur'an in Session Four, is not to argue about these matters, but instead to acquaint each other with an outline of what your respective sacred texts actually contain.**





### *Shaping the Presentation*

The Christian participants will bring their own copies of the Bible. Each should share one of these with a Muslim colleague. You can lay out for view the various other translations you have collected, along with a Catholic and Protestant Bible. Then underscore the fact that these assembled copies — while all copies of the Bible — are not all the same.

(Perhaps a few minutes can be spent reading and comparing different translations of a chosen text: the Prologue to the Gospel of John, for example.) Then you can add words like these:

“All these English-language Bibles are translated from Hebrew and Greek originals, and different translations abound. (By one estimate - see *Christian Century*, 11/16/10, p 17 - in English alone 200 new translations have been published since 1900.) Sometimes these differences lead to confusion and dispute. In addition, the actual contents will differ depending on whether the Bible in question is intended for Protestants or for Catholics (You can point out that the Catholic Bible contains the so-called Apocryphal/ Deuterocanonical Books of the Old Testament, while the Protestant Bible doesn't; and that Greek and Slavonic Bibles contain still other books.) But the key contents are the same in all Bibles: The Torah, Writings, and Prophets of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament. Christians see in the words of the Old Testament a prophecy or prefiguring of the coming of Jesus Christ to share in our human life and of the transforming effect on us all of his death and resurrection.”

At this point, invite participants to look together at the Contents page of the Bible they're holding, so that together all can examine the various books of the Old Testament and their arrangement. Don't spend too long on this. The point is merely to give your Muslim colleagues a feel for the extent and variety of the Old Testament material.

Then say something like this:

“The Old Testament collects the expressions of many different writers over a long period of time, perhaps centuries. The New Testament, by contrast, contains the work of just a few writers, principally the writers of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), and Paul, who wrote a series of letters to newly-formed Christian communities outside Jerusalem and in Rome. We have four versions of the life of Jesus in the four Gospels. Each was written to address different audiences or communities of faith and has unique insights on the message of Jesus. This shows a theological and pastoral diversity in Christianity from the very beginning. Most of this material stems from just a few decades of the first and second centuries CE. Almost all Christians believe that while the Bible was written by people, its language is nevertheless inspired by the Holy Spirit. The true Word of God for Christians isn't the literal text of the Bible, but the living presence of Christ, available to humanity through the Holy Spirit.”

That's enough to say in the presentation itself. Allow Muslims to leaf through the pages of the New Testament and to come up with their questions. They will probably have many, most of which will likely be focused on the Gospels. (For example: How exactly are they different? How can they be trusted since they tell Jesus' story in different ways? etc.) Obviously there won't be time to answer questions like these and others in any



detail. Anyway, none of you are expected to be scripture scholars! Do the best you can. If you can't answer a question, say that you'll consult with staff at your church and get back to people at the next session. The point is to enjoy the lively debate that ensues. Sincere questioning about one's faith by an outsider can be a very healthy stimulus for a deeper understanding of that faith! Your Muslim colleagues will probably be absorbing this same lesson in Session Four, when the tables will be turned and you will have the chance to question them about the Qur'an.



## SESSION THREE

### DVD Discussion

The DVD, “In the Footsteps of Jesus” introduces the seven themes of “public theology.” “Public theology” means that while these themes are part of the Catholic social teaching, they are not “owned” by one denomination or faith tradition. (A fuller explanation of “public theology” will be presented in Chapter Seven of the text, and a discussion of the themes themselves is provided for in Session Seven.)

Possible Questions or Topics for Large Group Discussion:

1. Part I of the DVD identifies the biblical context for the ministry of Jesus and a brief survey of the social teaching of recent popes. How have these values of the bible and Catholic social teaching been visible in the Catholic community?
2. Which themes are evident to the Muslim participants as they observe the public work and witness of the Roman Catholic Church?
3. In Part II eight leaders are identified with the themes. Which person impressed you and why? Can you name other leaders who embody these teachings?
4. Which of the seven themes strikes you as very important today? Explain your selection.



## SESSION THREE

### *Closing Ceremony*

*Once again the facilitator and the Muslim and Christian participants gather in front of the table. The facilitator relights the large candle. The Muslim and Christian who lit the small candles during the opening ceremony do so again and sit down. The Muslim and Christian volunteer readers have their scripts.*

After a pause for reflection of about a minute, the facilitator begins:

**Where did God's Light guide us this evening?**

Muslim reader:

**It guided us to an understanding of the Bible's call to social justice.**

Christian reader:

**And to the question whether we Christians have responded to that call with the single-mindedness Jesus and the Prophets asked of us.**

Facilitator:

**And did the discussion resolve that question for you?**

Muslim reader:

**It did not resolve the question, but it allowed us to acknowledge the high standards that should govern our behavior as individuals and as representatives of our respective religions.**

Christian reader:

**And to begin to address charitably our own and each other's failure to reach those standards.**

Facilitator:

**We have come far enough for one evening. Let us watch as the two lights now become one again.**

The Muslim and Christian approach the table and extinguish the two smaller candles, leaving only the central one lit.

Facilitator:

**The Light of God shines fully and completely in both religions but is wholly contained in neither. Human understanding cannot grasp this paradox. Let us leave further enlightenment to God and go in peace, confident that God is guiding us step by step towards the goal we both most deeply seek, to love Him with our whole heart and our neighbor as ourselves.**



Muslims:  
**Amin.**

Christians:  
**Amen.**

After a minute of silence, the Muslim and Christian approach the table to extinguish the large candle together and the session ends.



## SESSION FOUR

### *Opening Ceremony*

*Everyone sits quietly for a minute in chairs facing the table.*

After the pause, the facilitator begins:

**We come together for our fourth session under the symbol of Water.**

At a cue from the facilitator, the Muslim and the Christian approach the table, each taking turns pouring out water from the pitcher into the basins, the Muslim pouring water into the basin near the Qur'an, the Christian pouring water into the basin near the Bible. They resume their seats.

Muslim reader:

**According to our Qur'an, Water is the source of all life, from plants to humankind. Sura an-Nahl 16:10 tells us: "It is He who sends down rain from the sky from which you drink, and from it comes the vegetation you give your cattle to eat."**

Christian reader:

**Water is the source of life in our Bible as well. Genesis 1:20 tells us: "And God said: 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.'"**

Muslim reader:

**Common symbol.**

Christian reader:

**Common understanding.**

Muslim reader:

**The Qur'an also says about Water that it should be used in preparation for prayer. Sura an-Nisa' 4:43 tells us: "O you who trust in God, do not go to your prayers with a mind distracted or in a passionate state, but wait until you know what you are saying and have bathed yourselves..." Sura al-Ma'ida 5: 6 says further: "...When you are about to pray, wash your face and your arms up to the elbows, and pass your wet hands over your head, and wash your feet up to the ankles..." All Muslims follow this command before we pray. The ritual of cleansing is called *wudu*. All parts of our body that come in contact with the everyday world, including feet, hands, ears, mouth, nose, and eyes, are touched and cleansed.**

The Muslim who poured the water before comes back up to the basin by the Qur'an, dips his/her hand in the water, and demonstrates the actions of *wudu*. Afterwards, he/she uses the towel placed near the basin as necessary.

Christian reader:

**We praise the intention of *wudu* but do not enjoin the practice itself.**

Muslim reader:

**Yet water is important to you.**

Christian reader:

**Yes, for water is the substance of baptism.**

Muslim reader:

**Baptism by the Prophet John, whom we honor as Yahya.**

Christian reader:

**John's baptism was an immersion in the Jordan River from which people rose cleansed of their sins.**

Muslim reader:

**The Qur'an does not speak of this baptism, but it is not perhaps so different from *wudu*.**

Christian reader:

**But baptism for us Christians is a sacrament, an immersion in water thanks to which we not only die to sin but rise through the Holy Spirit into the life of Christ.**

The two Christians approach the basin near the Bible. The Christian who poured the water at the start of the ceremony now takes the cup and dips it into the basin as the second Christian kneels or bows his/her head. The first Christian continues to hold the cup as the Christian reader says the words below. When the Christian reader quotes the words "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," the first Christian pours a little water on the head of the second (mimicking the action of baptism).

Christian reader:

**According to the Gospel of Matthew, 27: 19-20, Christ said to his disciples, after his resurrection from the dead, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you."**

The first Christian takes the towel and dries the hair of the second Christian. He/she replaces the cup and towel alongside the basin and both resume their seats.

Muslim reader:

**Two basins of water, drawn from the same source, identical to the eye, yet very different.**



Christian reader:

**Two very different understandings of God deeply affect the way we understand our common symbols.**

Muslim reader:

**Yet neither of us can understand God fully. Our Qur'an says, "Human vision cannot capture God, but God captures human vision."**

Christian reader:

**And the First Letter of John says, "No one has seen God."**

Muslim reader:

**Our common symbol of Water points to a reality beyond our grasp.**

Christian reader:

**Yet the symbol of Water helps us to maintain our progress along the way, by cleansing us of the dust of attachment, inaction, and lack of zeal.**

Muslim reader:

**Water that in God's time will cleanse us even of our differences.**

Christian reader:

**Water even purer than the waters of wudu and baptism.**

Facilitator:

**Let us bathe in the waters we are given even now, confident that by sincerely cleansing ourselves according to our present understandings, we will be freed to pursue the common good and to enter at last into the Salaam prepared for all who sincerely love God and neighbor.**

Muslims:

**Amin.**

Christians:

**Amen.**

After a minute of silence, the facilitator extinguishes the large candle. The session begins.





## SESSION FOUR

### An Introduction to the Qur'an

#### *Muslim Participants Teach their Christian Colleagues*

Now it's the Muslim participants turn to breathe a sigh of relief. With only 25 minutes to work in, you can't be expected to go into an exposition of the Qur'an in any kind of detail. What you can do, though, is give a brief description of it. At the same time you can indicate the way in which all Muslims understand the Qur'an, i.e. as God's literal words handed down by the angel Gabriel to the prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing upon him. This presentation should take no longer than 10 minutes. That leaves 15 minutes for Q&A. Remember that Q&A is where true learning is most likely to happen!

#### **Procedure:**

You should first read over the following background material. Then you should decide together, through phoning or e-mailing outside of class and before Session Four, how you want to divide up responsibility for the presentation itself. You should also remind each other to bring from home a copy of the Arabic Qur'an together with an English-language version of the Qur'an, both of which you can share with a Christian colleague.

#### *Background on Christians' understanding of the Qur'an*

It is rare to find any Christian who knows anything at all about the Qur'an, except for what s/he has picked up second-hand from the media. It goes without saying that this information is likely to be extremely distorted.

So your job is more difficult than simply telling people about something they don't know. You will probably be obliged to deal with a vast amount of misunderstanding of and outright prejudice against the Qur'an. Fortunately, this negativity won't be stemming directly from your Christian colleagues themselves but rather from the media culture they are actively trying to counteract, just by being together with you in this JustFaith Ministries module. You are dealing with people who sincerely want to know the truth and are very willing to be disabused of the many ways in which they've been blocked from that knowledge.

At the same time, you can't expect to rectify the situation in 25 short minutes! Your best approach is be matter-of-fact in your description of the Qur'an and to be ready during the Q&A period afterwards to plant seeds in your Christian colleagues for their deeper reflection in the days and weeks to come. And remember that the goal of your presentation, like that of your Christian colleagues' presentation of the Bible in Session Three, is not to argue about who's right and who's wrong, but instead to give your audience an accurate outline of what your sacred text actually contains.

Fortunately, in Session Two, you have already given your Christian colleagues a taste of the Qur'an, when you introduced them to the beauty of the Fatihah. In addition, your colleagues have been getting a sense of what the Qur'an says both from the Ceremonies



and from your common text. Having read Chapter Four of that text, for example, they are well aware of the Qur'an's support and advocacy of social justice. So, much of the work of overcoming misunderstandings has already been done.

### *Shaping the Presentation*

Begin by sharing with your Christian colleagues the English-language versions of the Qur'an you've brought with you. (One Muslim should team up with one Christian for this purpose.) Then the presenter can say something like this:

“While the Bible represents the words of many people collected and edited by others over a period of centuries, for the Old Testament, and over decades, for the New Testament, the Qur'an contains God's own words, delivered by the angel Gabriel to only one man, to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing on him), over a period of just 22 years, from 610 CE to 632 CE, until just before the Prophet's death. Since the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing on him) was not able to write, he committed God's words to memory and recited them constantly to all who would listen. They were taken down accurately by followers, arranged in an order approved by the Prophet, and compiled into manuscript form shortly after his death. We've already studied the Fatihah, the first sura of the Qur'an. There are 113 other suras, arranged in order of length, from the longest (Sura al-Baqarah) to one of the shortest (Sura an-Nas). This is the same principle of ordering we saw in the arrangement of the letters of Paul, in the New Testament: the longest letter, the Letter to the Romans, comes first; the shortest, the Letter to Philemon, comes last.”

Take time (5 minutes or so) to allow your Christian colleagues to leaf through your English-language version of the Qur'an, just to get a sense of the ordering just described. Your colleagues might also want to see how this arrangement looks in the Arabic Qur'ans you've brought with you.

Then the presenter can continue in words like these:

“The suras are usually divided between those that were handed down to the Prophet while he was still in Mecca and those that were handed down after his *hijra* or emigration to Medina in 622 CE. The Meccan suras tend to be shorter in length, hymnic in structure, and often prophetic or apocalyptic in tone. The Medinan suras tend to take a pastoral, legislative direction, reflecting God's concern for the Prophet's need to govern the young Muslim community that began to form around the Prophet once he reached Medina.”

Take a little time to point out to your Christian a couple of examples of the two different kinds of suras, Meccan and Medinan.

That's enough to say in the presentation itself. Allow your Christian colleagues to leaf through the pages of the Qur'an and to come up with their questions. They will probably have many. Some of their questions will likely be focused on words or phrases from the Qur'an that have become controversial in the media: “infidel (*kafir*),” for example, or “jihad,” or “shar” (the root of “shari'ah”). Obviously there won't be time to answer questions like these and others in any detail.

Another important point to remember is that none of you is expected to be a Qur'an scholar! Do the best you can. If you can't answer a question, say that you'll consult with the imam or other authority at your mosque and get back to people at the next session. The point is to enjoy the lively debate that ensues and to be open to the possibility that the questions may lead you into a deeper engagement with Islam itself.

As we said to your Christian colleagues in our instructions for their presentation of the Bible to you in Session Three, "sincere questioning about one's faith by an outsider can be a very healthy stimulus for a deeper understanding of that faith."



## SESSION FOUR

### DVD Discussion

#### **Starter Questions for a brief, Large Group discussion of the DVD, *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*:**

1. The DVD shows a number of Muslim Americans in various professions. What do we learn about the Muslim way of life and values from their words and actions?
2. Daisy Kahn says that “what Muhammad did for women is amazing.” Explore the meaning of that statement and the role of women in various Islamic countries today.
3. Jameel Johnson said we must work to make changes, we must seek justice. Do you agree with his perspective? If so, how could Muslims, Christians, and all people in your community work together for justice? If not, why not?



## SESSION FOUR

### Closing Ceremony

*Again, the facilitator and the Muslim and Christian participants gather in front of the table.*

After a pause for reflection of about a minute, the facilitator begins:

**From what did God's Water cleanse us this evening?**

Muslim reader:

**It cleansed our hearts from rivalry as we compared our social-justice traditions.**

Christian reader:

**And from the temptation to accuse each other of not having lived up to the high standards these traditions entail.**

Facilitator:

**And did the discussion resolve your questions about why God chose such different covenants in which to root your common commitment to love Him and love neighbor?**

Muslim reader:

**It did not resolve the question, but it allowed us to acknowledge that that common commitment should govern our behavior as individuals and as representatives of our respective religions.**

Christian reader:

**And to begin to address charitably our own and each other's failure to behave as we have been taught.**

Facilitator:

**We have come far enough for one evening. Let us watch as the two waters now become one again.**

The Muslim and Christian approach the table and pour the water remaining in the two basins back into the pitcher. They resume their seats.

Facilitator:

**The Water of God cleanses believers of both religions but is wholly contained in neither. Human understanding cannot grasp this paradox. Let us leave further enlightenment to God and go in peace, confident that God is guiding us step by step towards the goal we both most deeply seek, to love Him with our whole heart and our neighbor as ourselves.**



Muslims:  
**Amin.**

Christians:  
**Amen.**

After a minute of silence, the Muslim and Christian approach the table to extinguish the large candle together and the session ends (unless the participants have decided to conclude with the common prayer).



## SESSION FIVE

### *Opening Ceremony*

*Everyone sits quietly for a minute in chairs facing the table.*

After the pause, the facilitator begins:

**We come together for our fifth session under the symbols of Space & Time.**

**Christians and Muslims mark their orientation to God by honoring in worship particular directions in Space.**

The Christian reader has a map by his/her chair. After the facilitator has spoken, the Christian reader gets up and places the map in the holder on one side of the pillar candle, then returns to his/her seat.

Facilitator:

**Muslims and Christians mark their orientation to God in another way, by honoring in worship particular moments in Time.**

The Muslim reader has a clock by his/her chair. After the facilitator has spoken, the Muslim reader gets up and places the clock in the holder on the other side of the pillar candle, then returns to his/her seat.

Muslim reader:

**Common symbols.**

Christian reader:

**Common meanings.**

Facilitator:

**Yet while Christians and Muslims share the symbols of Space & Time in their prayer, they understand the symbols differently.**

Muslim reader:

**When we pray, we are always to orient ourselves in space toward the Ka'bah. The Holy Qur'an says: "So from wherever you start, turn your face in prayer towards the sacred place of prostration, for this is a true command of your Cherisher and Sustainer, and God is not unaware of all you are doing." (Sura al-Baqarah 2: 150)**

**The Ka'bah is the cube-like structure in the holy city of Mecca. The Ka'bah is located on the site of the altar built by Abraham and his son Ishmael from the ruins of the first of all altars to God, the altar built by Adam. Our always directing ourselves towards the Ka'bah whether praying alone or in community is a sign of our desire for unity.**



Christian reader:

**We Christians once prayed towards the East, in expectation of Christ's Second Coming. Some Christians still do so. But we have always directed ourselves in our public worship towards the pulpit and altar of the local church where the risen Christ becomes present in word and sacrament.**

Muslim reader:

**We Muslims orient our prayer in time according to the movements of sun and moon. The times of our daily prayer are precisely set by the rising and the setting of the sun. Our months are determined by the rising and setting of the moon. The holy month of Ramadan is precisely marked by sightings of the moon. In this way we praise God the Creator who sustains all things in being from second to second.**

Christian reader:

**Our monastic communities still connect daily prayer with the passing of time. But for all of us the day of greatest honor is the day after the Sabbath, Sunday, because Sunday is the Eighth Day, the day of Christ's resurrection, the day when time itself will be fulfilled in the coming of Christ.**

Muslim reader:

**Common symbols.**

Christian reader:

**With different meanings. Yet the differences do not tell the whole story.**

Muslim reader:

**Yes: for our Qur'an also says, "Every community faces a direction of its own, whose focal point is God. So run as in a race, competing with each other to do good works. God will gather you all, from wherever you come, to Himself, for God has the direction of all things." Sura al-Baqarah 2: 148. Large as the symbols of Space and Time are, they are not large enough to capture God.**

Christian reader:

**Yes: for we Christians read in the Book of Acts about what the angels said to Jesus' disciples after his Ascension: " 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.' " God is not to be held to a particular time and place. We know only that He is present now and will come again.**

Muslim reader:

**Our symbols of Space and Time point to realities beyond our grasp.**

Christian reader:

**Yet the symbols of Space and Time also orient both of us in our present time and place, directing our faces even here and now, even in the midst of war and**





**prejudice, towards God's beauty and glory, the source and stimulus of human enlightenment and spiritual flourishing.**

Muslim reader:

**Space and Time point towards a wholeness that embraces us all.**

Christian reader:

**Rather than towards occasions and places that divide us.**

Muslim reader:

**Symbols that point us to a Space and Time beyond our differences.**

Christian reader:

**A Space and a Time which we reach by following a Path, our map on that Path a Book, our way forward illuminated by a Light, our bodies purified during the journey by Water.**

Facilitator:

**Let us walk together now towards the place marked by that Space and Time, confident that by pursuing the common good God will not lead us astray, but will instead bring us into the Salaam prepared for all those who sincerely love God and neighbor.**

Muslims:

**Amin.**

Christians:

**Amen.**

After a minute of silence, the facilitator extinguishes the large candle. The session begins.



## SESSION FIVE

### Debriefing the Mosque/Church Visits

The debriefing, whether of the mosque or the church visit, can focus on questions like those below. Note that some questions pertain to all participants, others to members of the “other” faith. You will not have time to cover all of these questions during session Five, though.

*For all participants:*

- What memory of your visit stands out most clearly when you think back on it? Explain why this memory stands out for you more clearly than others?
- Did you find anything in the experience confusing or upsetting? Explain.

*For members of the “other” religion:*

- Did anything you saw or heard during the visit contradict what you have been learning about the religious beliefs of Christians/Muslims in our sessions?
- Did any of the practices you witnessed resemble practices of your own religion?
- What practices seemed to you most unlike practices in your own religion? How did these differences make you feel (intrigued, offended, surprised, etc.)?

*For members of the host religion:*

- Were you aware during the visit that you were experiencing your faith in a new way, that is, through the eyes of your Muslim/Christian colleagues? Explain.
- Did you see something different in your faith when you saw it through others’ eyes? Explain.



## SESSION FIVE

### DVD Discussion

#### Large Group Discussion (*Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet* continued)

1. The DVD describes Muhammad's decision to fight rather than to be the victim of persecution. Do you agree with his decision? Why? Why not?
2. Is this decision similar to the development of the just war tradition in Christianity?
3. Kevin James talks about the "Bigger Jihad" that Muhammad taught his followers. How has Mr. James applied this Jihad in his own life?
4. Kevin James said the attack of 9-11 is contrary to Islam. What are his reasons for saying this? Do the Muslim participants support his approach? Explain.



## SESSION FIVE

### *Closing Ceremony*

*Once again the facilitator and the Muslim and Christian participants gather in front of the table with the Scriptures and the clock and the map still in place. The facilitator relights the large candle. The Muslim and Christian volunteer readers have their scripts.*

After a pause for reflection of about a minute, the facilitator begins:

**How did the Symbols of Space & Time serve us this evening?**

Muslim reader:

**They revealed an occasion and a place where we could compare our social-justice traditions calmly and without prejudice.**

Christian reader:

**And where we could begin to distinguish between motivations that reflect those traditions and those that do not.**

Facilitator:

**And did you find that it was easy to make such distinctions?**

Muslim reader:

**We did not find it easy. But we found guidance in the standard of behavior that must flow from those who love God and neighbor: mildness, peaceableness, creativity, openness, hospitality.**

Christian reader:

**The very behavior exemplified long ago uniquely by Francis and the Sultan, but enjoined on all of us today.**

Facilitator:

**We have come far enough for one evening. Let us leave further enlightenment to God and go in peace, grateful that God has brought us so far along the Path in only five weeks, to a Space & Time already made holy by his guidance, and confident that he will bring us even closer to the goal we both most deeply seek, to love Him with our whole heart and our neighbor as ourselves.**

Muslims:

**Amin.**

Christians:

**Amen.**

After a minute of silence, the facilitator approaches the table to extinguish the large candle and the session ends (unless the participants have decided to conclude with the common prayer).



## SESSION SIX

### *Opening Ceremony*

*Again, the ceremony begins with everyone sitting quietly facing the table.*

Facilitator:

**We come together for our sixth session under the symbol of Posture. Christians and Muslims symbolize their spiritual intention to love God and God alone in their physical Posture during prayer.**

Muslim reader:

**Common symbol.**

Christian reader:

**Common meaning.**

Facilitator:

**Yet while Christians and Muslims share the symbol of Posture in their prayer, they understand the symbol differently.**

Muslim reader:

**When we Muslims pray, we assume a prescribed series of postures in unison, as one body. We refer to this form of prayer as Salat, one of the Pillars of Islam. The postures themselves derive from the practice of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing on him. By imitating his actions during prayer, we draw closer to the man whose beautiful example we take as our model in all things. And by drawing closer to the Prophet, peace and blessing on him, we draw closer to God. For the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing on him, embodied the perfection of human obedience to God's will.**

The Muslim who has volunteered to demonstrate the postures of Salat goes to the front of the table, then turns to face the others. He/she takes his/her cues from the Muslim reader for what follows. The Muslim reader and demonstrator should practice beforehand so as to be able to enact the postures clearly and unhurriedly.

Muslim reader:

- **We begin by cleansing ourselves with Water.** The Muslim in front faces the other participants and mimics the actions of *wudu*. (Note: In what follows, we are asking that the prayer rug be oriented in such a way that the demonstrator *faces the other participants*, that is, with his/her back to the table and facing front. If Mecca corresponds to that direction, so much the better. But for purposes of modesty and clarity, the demonstrator should face front regardless of what the actual, canonical direction might be.)

- **Then we prepare a clean place for prayer by spreading a rug on the floor or ground. Normally, we align the rug in the direction of the Ka’bah.** The demonstrator gestures in that direction. **But for our purposes here we will face away from the table.** The demonstrator faces forwards, then takes the prayer rug from the table, unrolls it in front of him/her.
- **We begin in a standing position, if we are physically able.** (After this bulleted statement and all subsequent ones, the Muslim reader pauses while the Muslim demonstrator carries out the action referred to.)
- **We then form our intention to pray our prayer as if it were our last prayer on earth, symbolizing this intention by bringing our spread hands to the level of our shoulders and reciting “God is great” in Arabic.**
- **We recite the Fatihah.**
- **We bow our body until our hands are on our knees, reciting “Praise be to God” in Arabic.**
- **We straighten up again and stand while reciting “God is great” and “Praise be to God.”**
- **We prostrate ourselves, putting the following parts of the body — the bare forehead, both palms, both knees, the base of the toes of both feet — on the place of prostration. We envision ourselves prostrated at God’s very feet.**
- **We sit back, asking in Arabic God’s forgiveness.**
- **We repeat the previous sequence of standing, prostrating, and sitting.**
- **While sitting for the second time, we say additional prayers.**
- **We turn to our right to say a blessing to the angel at our right shoulder (the angel recording our good deeds); we turn to our left to say a blessing to the angel at our left shoulder (the angel recording our transgressions).**
- **We stand.**
- **This is the basic form of Salat.**

The Muslim demonstrator rolls up the prayer rug, replaces it on the table, and sits down.

The Christian who has volunteered to demonstrate the postures of Christian prayer goes to the front of the table, then turns to face the others. He/she takes his/her cues from the Christian reader for what follows. The Christian reader and demonstrator should practice beforehand so as to be able to enact the postures and gestures clearly and unhurriedly.

Christian reader:

**Posture during Christian prayer has always been and continues to be diverse. But in all its forms our posture during prayer symbolizes our identification with the crucified and risen Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

**Depending on their denomination and their culture, Christians at various moments during prayer or liturgy:**

- **stand** (After this bulleted statement and all subsequent ones, the Christian reader pauses while the Christian demonstrator carries out the action referred to.)
- **bow**



- kneel
- in some places, some congregants may approach the altar or holy shrine on their knees
- while some may even prostrate themselves fully.

Certain gestures may accompany certain postures:

- **Roman Catholics make the Sign of the Cross when they bow or kneel before the altar and the Blessed Sacrament and when they respond to the Priest's blessing during Mass. They make the gesture by using the fingers of the right hand to touch the forehead, the lower chest or abdomen, the left breast, and the right breast. The phrase "In the name of the Father" accompanies touching the forehead; "and of the Son" accompanies the touching of the left breast; "and of the Holy Spirit" accompanies the touching of the right. (The Christian demonstrator illustrates.)**
- **After the reading of the Gospel at Mass, they stand while making with their thumb the Sign of the Cross over their forehead, mouth, and heart, accompanying the gesture with the phrase: "May Christ's words be in my mind, on my lips, and in my heart." (The Christian demonstrator illustrates.)**
- **In the Orthodox tradition, the same gesture is made but with the thumb, index, and third finger brought together to form a point, symbolizing the Trinity. The other two fingers curve together towards the palm, symbolizing Christ's two natures, as both human and divine. Another difference from Roman Catholic practice is that Orthodox believers cross themselves from the right breast to the left rather than from left to right. (The Christian demonstrator illustrates.) The sign of the cross in all its forms symbolizes our union with Jesus.**
- **Some Protestant traditions use the Sign of the Cross, but many others rejected it during the Reformation, as they also rejected bowing and kneeling.**
- **In other Protestant traditions, posture reflects the spontaneous movement of the Holy Spirit within the believer. (The Christian demonstrator illustrates with gestures suggesting a charismatic form of worship.)**
- **Yet all Christians acknowledge God's presence to us in the Risen Christ through the Holy Spirit by bringing our hands together in supplication or by spreading our arms outward, palms up. (The Christian demonstrator illustrates.)**

Muslim reader:

**Posture — common symbol of our dedication to God's word.**

Christian reader:

**A symbol with different meanings. Yet the differences do not tell the whole story. For Posture may not reflect the true disposition of the heart.**



Muslim reader:

**Yes, for our Qur'an says, "Woe to those praying ones whose hearts are in one place, their prayer in another: those who want only to be seen and to be praised, and deny all help to those less fortunate." Sura al-Ma'un 107: 4-7.**

Christian reader:

**Yes, for Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew says, "And whenever you pray. Do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward." (Matthew 6: 5)**

Muslim reader:

**Our symbol of Posture points to a fidelity to God we can at best only approximate.**

Christian reader:

**And then only with the help of God's grace.**

Muslim reader:

**Yet the symbol of Posture orients both of us in our present time and place, even in the midst of prejudice and war, reminding us of our goal, of our yielding of ourselves fully and totally to God and no other.**

Christian reader:

**Enabling us to pray that "thy will be done," for only when our intention to love God and neighbor is pure can we hope to glimpse God's beauty and glory.**

Muslim reader:

**Posture prepares our bodies for the journey that still lies before us.**

Christian reader:

**Away from occasions and places that divide us.**

Muslim reader:

**Towards a Space and Time beyond our differences.**

Christian reader:

**A Space and Time which we reach by following a Path — our map on that Path a Book, our way forward illuminated by a Light, our bodies purified during the journey by Water and disciplined by Posture.**

Facilitator:

**Let us walk together now towards the place marked by that Space and Time, confident that by pursuing the common good God will not lead us astray, but will instead bring us into the Salaam prepared for all those who sincerely love God and neighbor.**





Muslims:  
**Amin.**

Christians:  
**Amen.**

After a minute of silence, the facilitator extinguishes the large candle. The session begins.



## SESSION SIX

### Websites Discussion Islamophobic Material

No DVD will be shown in Session Six. Not that visuals don't play a very important part in establishing the theme we will ask you to confront at that time: Islamophobia. And not that Islamophobic videos don't exist. They do exist. They are slickly made; and, they are very seductively persuasive. But we are not asking you to buy these products. They can be accessed in whole or in part from their accompanying websites. And that is sufficient for our purposes.

In order to prepare for this segment of Session Six, we ask that you spend whatever time you feel is necessary in order to familiarize yourselves with the websites associated with two Islamophobic videos: "Obsession" and "The Third Jihad." The relevant websites are [www.obsessionthemovie.com](http://www.obsessionthemovie.com) and [www.thethirdjihad.com](http://www.thethirdjihad.com). "Obsession" was inserted free of charge in the Sunday supplements of newspapers published in swing states during October 2008, just prior to the Presidential election. "The Third Jihad" was used by the New York City Police Department in 2009 in required counter-terrorism training courses. "Obsession" stirs up Americans' fear of an external enemy identified as "Islamic." "The Third Jihad" stirs up fears of an internal "Islamic" enemy working undercover to transform the U.S. into a caliphate (the office or government of the civil and religious leader of a Muslim state) under Shari'ah law.

If the site where you are meeting for this module is equipped with Wifi or other internet connection, see if a screen and projector are available there so that all participants can view these websites together. If a screen and projector aren't available, arrange for two or three of you to bring in your laptops so that all of you can see at least one screen comfortably. In this case, some one of you who has familiarized yourself with these websites can orchestrate your moving together from link to link. If no Wifi is available at your place of meeting, do your viewing privately at home and come to Session Six with comments or questions you think ought to be raised in reaction to these websites.

Muslim participants should be prepared to help their Christian counterparts understand where facts about Islam or about Muslim personalities or organizations are being distorted or where outright lies are being asserted as fact.

Even though "Obsession" and "The Third Jihad" represent extreme Islamophobic views, the prejudice driving them operates in the mainstream media as well. Islamophobia takes a "softer," more subtle form in the mainstream media and for that reason may even be more insidious. Muslim participants are encouraged to bring in Islamophobic examples from mainstream media to help their Christian friends see how pervasive the scapegoating of Muslims has become.



A final thought to consider: Not only does the current outbreak of Islamophobia put Muslims constantly on the defensive. The outbreak seems to create the notion, just by its persistence, that “there must be something to it.” The absence of media attention to other forms of religious terrorism — by Christians, for example — can count for some as a kind of “evidence by absence.” No hype, no problem. The media’s capacity to “manufacture” news is at issue here, as well as the way fear creates its own poisoned “reality.”

### **Discussion of Islamophobic Websites: Before the Break**

Our guidelines here must be general, since no two JustMatters module groups will be looking at exactly the same things in Session Six. The main focus of your discussion of the websites and any other Islamophobic material participants have brought to Session Six should be on helping each other be clear about (1) where these websites/materials are distorting truth and on (2) analyzing the techniques the websites use to make the distortions seem believable.

Some typical techniques involve:

- Showing footage only on fanatical Muslims, giving the impression that this is the way all Muslims think.
- Masking the social/political context for images of Muslims behaving angrily or in protest.
- Masking the full scriptural context for apparently “damning” quotations from the Qur’an.
- Masking the backgrounds or political affiliations of “authorities”; masking the basis for choosing these authorities and not those advancing differing interpretations
- Substituting the part for the whole, or the extreme case with the normative one
- Blending well-attested facts about Islam or the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing on him) with falsehoods.

This is a necessary if unpleasant exercise, a “reality check” for each participant involved. It also is a necessary step in forging a stronger group identity. This strength will be tested once you finish the module and “go public” with your social-justice project (which will be identified in Session Eight). You will be confronted from time to time by those who have been influenced by “The Third Jihad” or other media products like this.

### **Discussion of Islamophobic Websites: After the Break**

*How should you handle confrontations by those who have been taken in by these websites and other Islamophobic material? That’s exactly the question you are asked to begin to address at this time. We put it that way, “begin to address,” because the question can’t be resolved in thirty minutes, or in an hour. The question is one you’ll need to come back to again and again as you engage the world through your praxis/jihad.*



Here are some additional questions that may help you not only with the Session Six discussion of the websites but also with others you may have in the days and months to come. The questions are based on your assessment of the tone/state of mind and spirit of the person or group confronting you.

- If the person or group is openly hostile, should you answer them in kind? What do your respective scriptures say about dousing fire with fire?

Muslims can explicate Qur'an 25:63, "The servants of God are those who walk humbly on the earth; and when ignorant, vicious people harass them verbally, they say, "Peace be upon you."; Christians, Matthew 5:44, "Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors." (Are any of you familiar with the work of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation? If not, one of you should visit their website, forusa.org, and report back on what this long-standing international organization has to say about non-violent responses to hostile behavior. At some point, your group might want to take part in one of FOR's non-violent training workshops. Check the FOR website to see if such a workshop is scheduled in or near your town.)

- If the person or group has been partly persuaded by Islamophobic material but still seems open to a different view, how should you proceed?

Should you immediately advance counter-arguments? How important is it to assess, before you say anything, the level of fear the person or group has been brought to? In general, how susceptible to rational argument is a person or group damaged by fear? What other kinds of response might be more helpful initially? At what point in your developing relation with the person or group would rational argument become most effective?

- To those who are sincerely open to a different understanding of Islam and Muslims than the one Islamophobia proposes, what are the most cogent responses you could offer?

Imagine yourselves sitting with open-minded non-Muslims at a viewing of "The Third Jihad." What would you say in response to that video's various lies and insinuations?

## SESSION SIX

### *Closing Ceremony*

*Participants gather in front of the table with the Scriptures and the prayer rug in place.*

Facilitator:

**How did the symbol of Posture serve us this evening?**

Muslim reader:

**It revealed our obligation to discipline our bodies to express faithfully our intention to love God and neighbor.**

Christian reader:

**It revealed also our sinful tendency to turn the obligation against itself: to pray piously on the outside but to harbor prideful, even violent thoughts within.**

Muslim reader:

**Behavior all too clearly documented in the ongoing acts of enmity perpetrated against each other by our respective communities.**

Facilitator:

**And did you find that it was easy to talk about these transgressions and hypocrisies?**

Christian reader:

**We did not find it easy. But we found hope in the standard of behavior exemplified by Francis and the Sultan: mildness, peaceableness, creativity, openness, hospitality. The standard of behavior not even Francis and the Sultan could have reached without God's grace.**

Muslim reader:

**Grace always available to us, for God is Most beneficent, Most Merciful.**

Facilitator:

**We have come far enough for one evening. Let us leave further enlightenment to God and go in peace, grateful that God has brought us so far along the Path in only six weeks, to a Posture disciplined by his guidance, and confident that he will bring us even closer to the goal we both most deeply seek, to love Him with our whole heart and our neighbor as ourselves.**

Muslims:

**Amin.**

Christians:

**Amen.**

After a minute of silence, the facilitator approaches the table, extinguishes the large candle and the session ends (unless participants decided to use the common prayer).

## SESSION SEVEN

### *Opening Ceremony*

*Everyone sits quietly for a minute in chairs facing the table.*

Facilitator:

**We come together for our seventh session under the symbol of Meal.**

*The Christian and the Muslim readers have the baskets at their side. They rise as one, each carrying their basket to the table, where they fill the plates with the fruits and breads. They take turns filling the cups from the pitcher. When finished, they resume their seats, moving together.*

**Christians and Muslims symbolize their vision of shalom, salaam, fullness of being, as a sacred meal, in which the love of God and neighbor are celebrated and perfected.**

Muslim reader:

**Common symbol.**

Christian reader:

**Common meaning.**

Facilitator:

**Yet while Christians and Muslims share the symbol of Meal in their vision of shalom/salaam, they understand the symbol differently.**

Muslim reader:

**We envision meal as our reward in the next life for our self-yielding to God in this. For we believe that after death we will reunite with our spouses in our resurrected bodies. We will be perfectly at one with each other and with all other pairs and with God, delighting without weariness in the good gifts of creation and in human exchange that has been purified of all harm.**

**The Holy Qur'an says:** (Read the Qur'anic passages below as one continuous passage.)

**Those foremost in the next life will be those foremost in faith in this:**

**Those drawn closest to God.**

**They will dwell in gardens of joy,**

**Many from former times,**

**Only a few from our own.**

**They will recline on couches inset with gold,**

**Facing each other in perfected love,**

**Waited upon by youths who will never know death**

**Who fill goblets, pitchers, and cups with a pure liquid**

**Causing no ache, confusion, or intoxication,**

**And who offer whatever fruits they wish**

**And whatever flesh of fowl they desire.** (Sura al-Waqi'a 56:10-19)



**They will recline among lote-trees heavy with fruit,  
under acacias with tiered flowers  
in extended shade  
and water ever-flowing  
and fruits in abundance  
always in season  
always permitted,  
and with them their spouses  
raised high among the blessed  
for we will bring them all into renewed being  
raising them in youth and sinlessness,  
loving, perfectly compatible  
in age and righteousness... (Sura al-Waqi'a 56:28-38)**

**No vain talk will they hear there, no mischief,  
But only the words "salaam, salaam." (Sura al-Waqi'a 56:25-26)**

**"Salaam"— a word from their Most Merciful Cherisher and Sustainer. (Sura Ya-Sin 36: 58)**

**We anticipate this paradisaical meal even here, while on earth, at the conclusion of our two great yearly feasts, at the end of Ramadan and at the end of the Hajj.**

Christian reader:

**We envision meal as our fullest union with the Risen Christ, symbolized in the sharing of the wine and bread of his Body given for us at the last supper with his disciples before his death on the cross.**

**The Gospel of Matthew tells the story this way:**

**"While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said: 'Take, eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'" (Matthew 26: 26-29)**

**We anticipate the fullness of this celebration even in this life. We do so in imitation of Jesus' own love of table-fellowship, for our Gospels tell many stories of Jesus' delighting to break bread with the people of God, especially those who were poor and marginalized. Yet he always taught that the bread he came to share was the bread of eternal life. We long to eat that bread in its fullness, as resurrected members of the Body of Christ, at table together in the Kingdom of heaven.**

Muslim reader:

**Common symbols.**

Christian reader:

**Different meanings.**



Muslim reader:

**Two meals, similar to the eye, yet very different.**

Christian reader:

**Different understandings of God deeply affect the way we understand our common symbol of meal.**

Muslim reader:

**Yet neither of us can understand the symbol of Meal fully. The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing upon him, reports God's saying of this paradisiacal Meal, "I have readied for My righteous servants what no eye has ever seen, and no ear has ever heard, and no heart of man has ever conceived." (See Muhammad Asad's n. 15 to Sura as-Sajdah 32:17)**

Christian reader:

**Likewise St Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians, referencing the prophet Isaiah, says, "No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him' — these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit." (1 Corinthians 2: 9-10)**

Muslim reader:

**Our common symbol of Meal points to a reality beyond our grasp: the fullness of our unity with each other and with God.**

Christian reader:

**Yet the symbol of Meal not only strengthens our faith in the present but also orients us to our goal and fulfillment, directing our faces even here and now, even in the midst of war and prejudice, towards God's beauty and glory, the source and stimulus of human enlightenment and spiritual flourishing.**

Muslim reader:

**A goal we reach in a Space & Time by following a Path — our map on that Path a Book, our way forward illuminated by a Light, our bodies purified during the journey by Water, disciplined by Posture, and strengthened by Meal.**

Facilitator:

**Let us walk together now strengthened by that Meal, confident that by pursuing the common good God will not lead us astray, but will instead bring us into the Salaam prepared for all those who sincerely love God and neighbor.**

Muslims:

**Amin.**

Christians:

**Amen.**





## SESSION SEVEN

### *Closing Ceremony*

*Once again the facilitator and the Muslim and Christian participants gather in front of the table with the Scriptures and the rolled-up prayer rug. The facilitator relights the large candle.*

The Muslim and Christian volunteer readers have their scripts.

After a pause for reflection of about a minute, the facilitator begins:

**How did the symbol of Meal serve us this evening?**

Muslim reader:

**It revealed the means of our mutual strengthening and the goal of our intention to love God and neighbor.**

Christian reader:

**It gave us hope that while differences between us remain, the fulfillment of our desire for salaam will come to fruition in the work we do together for the common good.**

Facilitator:

**And were you able to say what that common work might be?**

Muslim reader:

**We were not yet able to do that. But we explored and affirmed many principles of social justice which we share not only with each other but also with all people who desire good for their brothers and sisters.**

Facilitator:

**We have come far enough for one evening. Let us leave further enlightenment to God and go in peace, grateful that God has brought us so far along the Path in only seven weeks, to the vision of a Meal prepared for all who love Him and Him alone and their neighbor as themselves.**

Muslims:

**Amin.**

Christians:

**Amen.**

After a minute of silence, the facilitator approaches the table to extinguish the large candle and the session ends (unless the participants have decided to conclude with the common prayer).



## SESSION EIGHT

### *Opening Ceremony*

*The participants and facilitator stand back of the chairs, opposite the table, and facing it, the symbolic pathway once again in front of them. After an appropriate moment of silence, the facilitator goes forward along the path to light the central candle, followed by the Christian and Muslim reader, walking together. The Christian and Muslim light the smaller candles from the central candle, the Christian lighting the candle nearest the Bible, and the Muslim the candle nearest the Qur'an. When the two smaller candles are lit, the other participants come forward two-by-two, a Muslim side-by-side with a Christian (i.e. not in separate religious groups as in session one). They stand alongside the facilitator and the two readers. The facilitator is the first to take his/her seat, followed by the two readers, who sit together. The other participants fill in the remaining seats, alternating Muslim and Christian.*

Facilitator:

**We come together, Muslims and Christians, for the final session of this module. We are just as eager as we were in Session One to know how we might fulfill the divine command that we love God and neighbor.**

Muslim reader:

**Yet we are no longer constrained by our differences.**

Christian reader:

**We are instead energized by them.**

Muslim reader:

**We remember that God calls us together so that our very differences might enable us to grow more deeply in holiness. Listen again to the Qur'an, as we did in Session One:**

*“We have made you different, we have made you male and female, we have made you different tribes and nations, so that you might come to intimate knowledge of each other; the most generous of you in God's eyes are those most God-conscious; for God is all knowing, most wise.” (Sura al-Hujuraat 49:13)*

Christian reader:

**Yes, God calls us together, not to dissolve our separate identities, but so that we can realize our true oneness in Him. Listen again to the New Testament: “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.” (Ephesians 2:13-16)**



Muslim reader:

**We honor your faith in the power of the blood of Christ to reconcile enemies.**

Christian reader:

**We honor your faith in God's power to bring humankind to unity through their very differences.**

Muslim reader:

**We do not need to become baffled or offended by our differences.**

Christian reader:

**We can rest in "creative tension" as we employ the symbols that both divide and unite us.**

Muslim reader:

**We trust in the image of the Path to help us move as one community towards shalom, salaam, fullness of life together.**

Christian reader:

**We trust in the image of the Message or Book to inform our understanding and to strengthen our will for the journey.**

Muslim reader:

**We trust in the image of the Light to keep us from straying or forgetting or falling, and to attract us to God's beauty.**

Christian reader:

**We trust in the image of Water to cleanse us of the dust of attachment, inaction, lack of zeal, or of zeal for the wrong things.**

Muslim reader:

**We trust in the image of Space and Time to orient us to God's good creation and to God's fulfillment of that creation in the world to come.**

Christian reader:

**We trust in the image of Posture to discipline body, heart, and mind to act as one in service to God and neighbor.**

Muslim reader:

**We trust in the image of Meal to nourish us on our journey and to allow us to taste even now, even here, the consummation of our longing.**

Facilitator:

**Strengthened in faith and hope by these symbols we hold in common, let us move towards a concrete expression of the community we are becoming. Let us embrace a**



**praxis/jihad that is true to our principles and that will act as a positive sign of how Muslims and Christians can work together for the common good.**

All:

**Amin/Amen.**

After a pause for reflection, the facilitator puts out the candle, and the final session begins.



## SESSION EIGHT

### *Closing Ceremony*

*Once again the facilitator and the Muslim and Christian participants gather, this time in front of the table. The facilitator relights the candle, the participants, arranged as before in a semicircle around him, alternating Muslim and Christian.*

Facilitator:

**Where did we start from this evening?**

Muslim reader:

**We started from our common commitment to love God and neighbor.**

Christian reader:

**And from our decision to bring that commitment to life in dedication to our chosen issue.** [The speaker names the issue.]

Facilitator:

**And where did our path this evening take us?**

Muslim reader:

**It took us to a place where we could begin to walk with other groups along a common path of service, in concrete solidarity with those in need.**

Christian reader:

**And where we could begin to be a sign to others of Muslims' and Christians' true calling, as fellow laborers in the effort to bring shalom, salaam, fullness of life to all God's creation.**

Facilitator:

**We have come far enough for one evening, and for one Module. Let us leave together along the same path we came in on, confident that God is guiding us step by step towards the goal we both most deeply seek, to love Him with our whole heart and our neighbor as ourselves.**

Muslims:

**Amin.**

Christians:

**Amen.**

The participants file out along the symbolic path in the order along which they entered during the Opening Ceremony. The facilitator is last in line.



## SESSION NINE



### **In the Spirit of St. Francis and the Sultan**

#### **A Gathering after the Action!**

After the service project/action (identified in Session Eight), the group should reconvene to give thanks, celebrate and evaluate the action as well as the whole experience of this JustFaith Ministries JustMatters module.

Suggestions for this session include:

- Getting together over a “potluck” meal
- Celebrating the relationships that have been established during the program
- Giving thanks for the ability to work together
- Evaluating the “action” in terms of
  - Impact on the social issue
  - Personal learning
  - Interfaith witness to the community

And afterwards...

- Plan a group reunion in a few months.
- Continue spreading the word about your praxis/jihad so that others may see Christians and Muslims doing what God has called them to do: love Him and love the neighbor.

# JustFaith Ministries

## A Multilayered Ministry of Formation



Congratulations on completing a JustFaith Ministries (JFM) JustMatters module. JFM provides programs that transform people and expand their commitment to social ministry. Through these life-changing opportunities, members of a church can study, explore and experience Christ's call to care for the poor and vulnerable in a lively, challenging, multifaceted process in the context of a small faith community.

Jack Jezreel, M.Div., the founder and Executive Director of JustFaith Ministries, introduced the original JustFaith program in 1989 while working in a parish in Louisville, Kentucky. It was immediately and dramatically successful. Since then, over 20,000 people have participated in various JustFaith Ministries programs in over 1,200 churches across the country.

JustFaith Ministries, in conjunction with its partners, makes available introductory workshops, curriculum, resources, a website, and support services. While JustFaith Ministries was born from the success of the JustFaith program, the organization now includes the following new layers of opportunity for faith formation.

**JustFaith** focuses on discipleship and the call to be about God's dream of justice and compassion in a world scarred by the domestic and global crisis called poverty.

**Engaging Spirituality** presents a spiritual deepening process that invites small groups to explore the intersection between contemplative presence and social action.

**JusticeWalking (J-Walking)** is a process that forms small communities of older teens and adults to engage in a spiritual journey and exploration of the radical call of the Gospel.

**College JusticeWalking (J-Walking)** is a semester-long "Discipleship Journey" that forms small communities of college students as they experiment with living the Gospel message and the social implications of our faith.

JustFaith Ministries is able to offer these programs through the generosity of donors.

JustFaith Ministries also provides an online document, *Taking Action Resource Guide* ([http://www.justfaith.org/graduates/pdf/takeaction\\_resourceguide.pdf](http://www.justfaith.org/graduates/pdf/takeaction_resourceguide.pdf)) to help participants learn more and get involved in this and other issue.

## *Other JustFaith Ministries JustMatters Modules*

### **Living Solidarity: Government, the Federal Budget and the Common Good**

The federal budget *is* a moral document, and we are all called to bring our *values* - not our opinions - to the many conversations about the economy and the federal budget. During this eight session popular education module, participants will engage the question: “What kind of society do we wish to become?” The module’s many activities and discussions will help participants move beyond reflexive biases and myths and create a space for thoughtful dialogue, not debate, about both the role of government and how to pay for it.

### **Crossing Borders: Migration, Theology, and the Human Journey**

Immigration is a complex issue that is reshaping the cultural, economic and political landscape of the planet. Anyone who speaks of simple solutions either does not understand it or is not listening. Each group in the immigration debate makes rightful claims to issues like economic stability, American jobs, cultural integrity, fiscal constraints, national security, human rights, property rights, labor rights, law and order, and many other issues. Finding common ground amidst the fractious debate is not easy, which is the reason why it has become such an incendiary, political issue. This eight session module provides participants a chance to find common ground and to discover more about themselves, our God and the millions of people who are on the move in every part of the world.

### **God's Creation Cries for Justice. Climate Change: Impact and Response**

The approach to global climate change by the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change and the Catholic Bishops’ Environmental Justice Program has been to focus on the themes of prudence, poverty and the common good, as well as Catholic social teaching. This eight session module expands and explores these principles and has a strong emphasis on how climate change will impact the poor at home and abroad. It draws out arguments for and against action and demonstrates - through both faith and science - the hazards to poor people of doing nothing. The module addresses what will be needed to help those who are poor both at home and abroad - i.e., those who will be most impacted by climate change.

### **Prison Reform: The Church of the Second Chance**

This module was designed and written by Jens Soering, someone on the “inside,” and does not try to soften the gritty truth of prison reality. Soering introduces the “radical” Christian principle of restorative justice, points out the critical need for comprehensive prison reform, and provides a strong critique of the U.S. prison system. At the same time, he focuses throughout the module on the power of centering prayer and the Christian messages of reconciliation and redemption. This six session module, while focusing on the factual background for prison reform, is grounded in a deep spirituality and sense of humanity. It highlights interviews with long-term inmates and ministers from the “outside.”





### **New Wineskins: Forming Mission Based Communities**

The longing for Christian community is a call from God. Those who feel it need to heed God's call, listen carefully, and explore it with others who feel the same longing. This module is intended as an exploration of what these new wineskins of Christian community – these “mission based communities” – might look like. The readings and the prayer experiences are designed to help participants explore various aspects and realities of small communities. The overall module is designed to help (1) participants discern, individually and collectively, whether or not they will form a small faith community, and (2) groups begin the process of forming a small faith community based on a mission to and with those who are poor and vulnerable.

### **Engaging Our Conflicts: An Exploration of Nonviolent Peacemaking**

This eight session module was developed for JustFaith Ministries by Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service, the international leader in this work. The module explores the power and potential of nonviolent peacemaking in our lives and in the world. It also provides participants the opportunity to apply nonviolence to real issues that they are interested in taking action on, provides a strong understanding of and commitment to the practice of nonviolent peacemaking, cultivates a deeper communal practice in the group, and culminates in a peacemaking activity that participants plan and engage in.

### **In the Footsteps of the Crucified: Torture is Never Justified**

This eight session module represents the work of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT), Pax Christi USA, and the Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC). Why consider engaging in such a difficult and daunting subject? While the module does not flinch from the reality of torture, it is very much about healing, reconciliation based on revealing the truth and doing justice, and hope for the elimination of torture in our world!

### **Faith Encounters the Ecological Crisis**

This JustMatters module identifies ways in which we are already living beyond the biocapacity of the planet and challenges participants to identify elements of a spirituality for living through the ecological crisis. During the eight sessions of this module, participants will view several films, engage in small and large group discussion, and meet with several guest speakers as they consider various aspects of the ecological crisis. Participants will also identify ways to live with a rich and vibrant Earth community still intact, still able to support life.

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For additional and updated information on *JustMatters Modules*, visit [www.justfaith.org](http://www.justfaith.org) or contact the JustFaith Ministries Office at 502.429.0865.

