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THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Respect for Diversity of Faiths

SALT LAKE CITY | 18 April 2008 | A respect for the diverse beliefs and unique contributions of all the world's faiths is one of the hallmarks of Mormonism. From the earliest days of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Joseph Smith elevated the principle of religious liberty and tolerance: "We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may" ([Articles of Faith 1:11](#)).

In that same spirit, Church [President Thomas S. Monson](#) made a plea during general conference, a semiannual worldwide meeting, for more religious understanding: "I would encourage members of the Church wherever they may be to show kindness and respect for all people everywhere. The world in which we live is filled with diversity. We can and should demonstrate respect toward those whose beliefs differ from ours." Latter-day Saints accept all sincere believers as equals in the pursuit of faith and in the great work of serving humanity.

Emphasizing God's love for all people, not just those of one religion, [President Dieter F. Uchtdorf](#) of the First Presidency, the highest governing body of the Church, declared: "We honor and respect sincere souls from all religions, no matter where or when they lived, who have loved God, even without having the fullness of the gospel. We lift our voices in gratitude for their selflessness and courage. We embrace them as brothers and sisters, children of our Heavenly Father. ... He hears the prayers of the humble and sincere of every nation, tongue, and people. He grants light to those who seek and honor Him and are willing to obey His commandments."

The late Krister Stendahl, emeritus Lutheran Bishop of Stockholm and professor emeritus of Harvard Divinity School, established three rules for religious understanding: (1) When you are trying to understand another religion, you should ask the adherents of that religion and not its enemies; (2) don't compare your best to their worst; and (3) leave room for "holy envy" by finding elements in other faiths to emulate. These principles foster relationships between religions that build trust and lay the groundwork for charitable efforts.

The spiritual and physical needs of the world require goodwill and cooperation among different faiths. Each of them makes a valuable contribution to the larger community of believers. In the words of early Church apostle Orson F. Whitney, "God is using more than one people for the accomplishment of his great and marvelous work. The Latter-day Saints cannot do it all. It is too vast, too arduous, for any one people." Thus, members of the Church do not view fellow believers around the world as adversaries or competitors, but as partners in the many causes for good in the world. For example, the Church has joined forces with Catholic Relief Services in a "[collaboration of caring](#)" that aids victims of famine and natural disaster. Furthermore, the Church worked with Islamic Relief Worldwide and the Islamic Society of Great Salt Lake to provide [immediate humanitarian assistance](#) in December 2004 to the tsunami-hit areas of Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka.

It is important to note that interfaith cooperation does not require doctrinal compromise. Though the Church asserts its ecclesiastical independence and recognizes its doctrinal differences, this does not prevent it from partnering with other faiths in charitable projects. These efforts are based on universal values. A different

interpretation of the *atonement* of Christ, for example, need not diminish the *mandate* of Christ to “[love thy neighbor as thyself](#).” Therefore, it is necessary to maintain a separation between charitable efforts and doctrinal tenets, while at the same time sharing mutual concern for those in need. People of good faith do not need to have the exact same beliefs in order to accomplish great things in the service of their fellow human beings.

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