



“The Gifts of Pluralism” Concluding Conference Declaration

A preliminary draft was prepared by Chuck Stanford and his committee. During the conference, 4x6 cards were available to post comments about the draft. Fred Schuele proposed a final version which was unanimously adopted at the end of the conference.

This is an historic moment because never before have people of so many faiths in the Kansas City area convened to explore sacred directions for troubled times. Especially after the events of September 11, the need for our support for one another and the larger community is clear and commanding.

As members of the greater Kansas City community and guests, we have assembled on October 27 and 28, 2001, and worked together, worshipped together, enjoyed each other, and learned much from each other.

We do hereby declare our resolve to work towards making Kansas City, which we often call the Heart of America, a model community — one that opens its heart to the world. Here interfaith relationships shall be honored as a way of deepening one’s own tradition and spirituality, and the wisdom of many religions shall help to successfully address the environmental, personal, and social crises of our often fragmented world.

- ▶ The gifts of pluralism have taught us that nature is to be respected, not just controlled. Nature is a process that includes us, not a product external to us that can just be used or disposed of. Our proper attitude toward nature is awe, not utility. When we do use nature as we must -- for food, housing, and other legitimate purposes — we should do so with respect and care, preserving its beauty and mindful of its connection to the Sacred and ourselves.

- ▶ We have also learned that our true personhood may not be in the images of ourselves constrained by any particular social identities. When we realize this, our acts can proceed spontaneously from duty and compassion, and we need not be unduly attached to results beyond our control.

- ▶ Finally, when persons in community govern themselves less by profit and more by the covenant of service, the flow of history towards peace and justice is honored and advanced.

We declare that through our encounter with one another, we have discovered that clearer directions for our several faiths and for our society at large are needed and possible. In the name of our faiths, too often have prejudice and injustice been perpetuated, and we know that bigotry and bias continue. We pledge ourselves to guide our own faith communities in examining our own beliefs and practices, so we may be sincere beacons for reducing the incidence of unfair treatment of people, war, suffering, and other inhumanities in our world.

The work we have done this weekend is a turning point, we fervently hope, in overcoming the misunderstandings that separate persons and communities of faith. We commit ourselves to deepen our commitments to our own faith communities and to enlarge our understanding of kinship by honoring the faiths of others.

This conference, “The Gifts of Pluralism,” is thus the beginning of an expanded conversation by which we may show both our humanity and our gratitude in offering service to that which is Infinite and Ultimate, which we call by many names but identify in our hearts as the Source from which we come, to which we return, and which holds us in this present opportunity.