How do Episcopal parishes relate to other faiths—especially Islam?

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“Among the great changes taking place in the contemporary world, migration has produced a new phenomenon: non-Christians are becoming very numerous in traditionally Christian countries, creating fresh opportunities for contacts and cultural exchanges, and calling the Church to hospitality, dialogue, assistance and, in a word, fraternity.”

~ Pope John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio (37b), 1990
Christianity remains a significant force in the social and cultural life of the United States and other parts of the world—but increasingly in the U.S., it must “share the stage” with people from a wide range of religious perspectives. Certainly, the advancing rise of the “Nones” (those claiming no religious affiliation), with its accompanying decline of church attendance and membership, has been on the minds of church leaders across denominations for at least the past ten years. But Christian life and discourse in American society has also been impacted significantly by the slow but steady shift from a predominantly Judeo-Christian society to a religiously pluralistic society. This shift has been happening steadily for nearly fifty years. The 1965 U.S. Immigration Act opened (and in some cases reopened) the doors to newcomers to the U.S. from across the world, including people from the Middle East and Asia who brought with them their own faith traditions.

Since that time, the presence of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism has slowly but steadily increased across the American landscape. According to the Pew Research Center Religion and Public Life Project, an estimated 2.75 million Muslims lived in the United States as of 2011—compared to 1.92 million active, baptized members of the Episcopal Church that same year. In other words, while Christianity remains the largest single religion in America, there now are more Muslims than Episcopalians living in the United States—a fact noted by religion scholar Diana Eck, Director of Harvard University’s Pluralism Project, more than a decade ago.

Moreover, looking beyond the U.S., as cross-cultural migration and interchange increase, as the world moves toward a global community connected intimately through trade, education, economics, politics, sports, friendships, and—importantly—Facebook and Twitter, we have come to find ourselves more and more in relationship with people of other faiths. The exotic world of the foreign missionary is now increasingly home to all of us, no longer exotic or strange but simply the world that is where we live. Across the globe, wherever religious freedom has been allowed, the trend toward religious diversity has increased, and people have faced the challenge of coming to understand one another for the sake of the common good.

The challenge of interreligious dialogue is as old as connection, commerce, and contest between nations. It has long been an effort among religious leaders at both grassroots and global levels, including through the work of the Parliament of World Religions since 1893. In the 1980s, the Roman Catholic Church embraced interreligious dialogue as “a part of the Church’s evangelizing mission.” But the need for interreligious dialogue has become more strongly felt since September 11, 2001. As Archbishop Rowan Williams poignantly stated, “it was particularly the events of 9/11 that created a widespread awareness among both Christians and

Church leaders) to participate in an online survey about their interfaith experience. We wanted to hear from them whether and how these alumni (and others) learned about other faiths. We were interested in their experiences of teaching about other faiths in their parishes, and in their interfaith work in their communities. We also wanted to know about alumni perceptions regarding the similarities and differences between Muslim and Christian theology, and perhaps most challenging, whether our alumni have seen evidence of “Islamophobia” in their parishes and communities. In addition, we wanted to know about alumni goals, hopes, and plans regarding evangelism, interfaith education, and interfaith relations. All of these questions helped us get a sense for how VTS alumni prepared for and engaged in evangelism and building interfaith relationships.

Through a portion of a generous grant from the Henry Luce Foundation, we created an online survey and distributed email invitations to solicit participation among over 4,000 ordained and lay leaders in the Episcopal Church, including 1,700 VTS alumni. The invitation explicitly solicited alumni. From this group of email recipients, we received 353 survey responses (nearly a nine percent response rate from the total pool of recipients, but more likely a 20 percent response rate among alumni). Of these, over 300 completed the first 12 survey questions, over 200 wrote thoughtful responses to later open-ended questions, and 265 completed the basic demographic information at the end of the survey.

Survey respondents were from all regions of the U.S. and from other countries. Nearly half were from the southern United States and close to one-third were from the northeast. The remainder came from the Midwest and western U.S., except for about three percent (eight people) from other countries. Nearly two-thirds of respondents were men (with a higher percentage of men among older alumni). Similar to the racial distribution of clergy and laity in the Episcopal Church, 92 percent were white. Only 14 percent were under the age of 35, an additional 21 percent were between 35 and 49, and 40 percent were ages 50 to 64; one-fourth were age 65 or older. Most were ordained, with 15 percent identifying themselves as lay leaders. A large majority, 74 percent, serves in urban or suburban settings; the remainder are in small towns or rural areas.

The following sections of this article provide an introductory glance at results from this survey.

Muslims of the pressing need for deeper mutual understanding and more positive relationships.5 As is often the case, it is vivid moments of unexpected tragedy, cruelty, or kindness that stir us to pay attention in new ways to neighbors we had previously ignored or simply tolerated (in the worst sense of tolerance as “putting up with”). Since then, we have more closely witnessed and heard stories of Christians and Muslims in conflict, and also of Christians and Muslims coming to each others’ aid and protection—in Egypt and Lebanon, in Nigeria and the Sudan, in England and France, and in the United States. Perhaps of all religions with whom we engage in interfaith dialogue and action, none require as much immediate, careful attention as our relationship with Islam.

Virginia Theological Seminary has a long heritage of concern for Christian relations with and witness among other religions. Courses offered at VTS have provided interested students with opportunities to learn about other faiths in the context of preparation for Christian mission and ministry. In the past, these courses tended to focus on other faiths as they existed abroad, in other cultures. Today, we find ourselves facing a different reality. In the words of ELCA Bishop Mark Hanson, “Muslims are our neighbors, friends, colleagues, and, in some cases, family members. Our neighborhoods have become a living laboratory for engaging with the ‘other,’ for loving our Muslim neighbors as ourselves.”6 And yet, the challenge is the same as that for missionaries entering a new context: whether in America or in a distant geographic and cultural context, contemporary Christian mission involves an artful, balanced mix of confident, clear identity and witness coupled with deeply respectful listening to the authentic witness of others. This mutual witness and listening can only happen in the context of relationship and dialogue.

Survey: Islam and Other Faiths

The question then arises: How have the Seminary’s alumni prepared for, and how do they engage in and foster, interfaith relationships and dialogue? To explore this question, VTS invited its alumni (as well as other lay and ordained

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5 Foreword to Christian-Muslim Relations in the Anglican and Lutheran Communitues: Historical Encounters and Contemporary Projects by David D. Grafton (Editor), Joseph Duggan (Editor), Jason Craigie Harris (Editor), Palgrave Pivot (September 6, 2013), p. xi.

6 Ibid., p. ix.
Interest in Interfaith Relations

Two key findings emerged: a solid majority of ordained and lay church leaders associated with VTS has pursued some education in other religions, but this exposure does not consistently lead to action in the form of parish programs for interreligious education or cooperative interfaith engagement. Two-thirds of respondents indicated having some education in Islam and 72 percent indicated education in other religions. But less than half of respondents have held any forums or instruction about Islam (46 percent) or other religions (44 percent) in their parishes. Furthermore, only a few more than one-third (36 percent) have partnered with non-Christian congregations on various interfaith activities. The same pattern held when we restricted responses to those who were ordained, and it did not vary by years of ordained ministry.

This pattern, which held constant across gender, geographic location in the U.S., and other demographic features, deserves further examination. What contributes to the gap between church leaders’ interreligious education and their efforts to provide opportunities for such education and engagement in their parishes?

Two main factors contributed to a church’s degree of involvement in interreligious education and relations: geographic proximity to a non-Christian house of worship and prior education of a church’s leaders.

Let us turn briefly to proximity, which may have the most fundamental impact. Reflecting the increasing diversity of contemporary religious life, 61 percent of respondents were in parishes located within 10 miles of a mosque, and 82 percent were within 10 miles of another non-Christian house of worship (mainly Jewish, but also Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Bahai, and Mormon). But, as the chart reveals, compared to other non-Christian houses of worship, mosques or Islamic centers were much less frequently within a five-mile distance from respondents’ parishes—and were much more frequently at a distance of over twenty miles. Church leaders from smaller congregations were most likely to note a long distance from the nearest mosque, while church leaders from larger congregations (typically in urban and suburban settings) most frequently noted mosques within five miles of their parishes. As we will see later, this proximity has a direct impact on interfaith education and relations—as the saying goes, “out of sight, out of mind.”

Setting proximity aside, a parish’s engagement in interreligious education and relations also depends directly on the interest and investment of ordained and lay leaders in such efforts. One clear signal of interest and investment is prior education—especially through courses or through direct reading and study of a religion’s sacred texts. Two-thirds of respondents reported some form of education in Islam and 78 percent reported reading at least some portion of the Qu’ran (26 percent having read “significant portions” and 51 percent having read “a few verses”). In comparison, 72 percent reported education in other non-Christian faiths (Buddhism, Judaism, and Hinduism were most frequently cited) and nearly two-thirds indicated having read at least portions of sacred texts from other traditions (primarily Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, and Mormon). Beyond direct reading of sacred texts, education varied widely in breadth and depth, from formal courses to single lectures, public broadcasting programs, self-directed reading, travel or residence in foreign countries, visits at worship services, formal interfaith dialogues and informal conversations with non-Christian believers.

Although survey participants mentioned diverse means of learning about Islam and other religions, personal contact with other believers and/or living in a country
with a different majority religion had a particularly strong impact. This was true with Islam specifically, as exemplified in the following two written survey responses:

“Working with Islamic teachers and community leaders has been the most helpful for me. I can research and teach the tenets of other faiths, but to work with others who actually live out a life based in a different faith was very helpful to me emotionally and spiritually...”

“Living with Muslims in a country with Muslim leadership [was especially helpful]. Talking with Muslims - both those who actively practice their faith and those who are cultural Muslims - to hear their perspectives. Reading the Koran and commentaries that explain the historical background so I can better understand what the Prophet said and meant.”

In sum, many of our VTS alumni and other affiliated church leaders have been well-equipped through education and self-directed study to engage the work of interfaith education and relations. How then does such preparation influence ministry in Episcopal parishes?

**Interfaith Education**

The question begins with examining whether or not our affiliated church leaders provide opportunities for parish members to learn about other faith traditions. Although two-thirds to three-quarters of our church leaders have sought or received education in other religions, less than half have taught or held forums about Islam (46 percent) or other religions (44 percent) in their parishes. Significantly, this is nearly half of VTS-affiliated church leaders who are offering education about other non-Christian faiths.

A leader’s personal education in Islam or other faiths has a direct impact on his or her offering some educational programs in the parish or other ministry setting. Of those who taught or held forums about Islam, 80 percent had previously taken a course or received education in that religion. The remaining 20 percent who taught or held forums about Islam did so without benefit of such previous education, and one may ponder what information was conveyed in these cases.

There was an even clearer relationship between one’s personal education and one’s offer of education to parish members about other faith traditions. Among those who offered educational forums in their congregations about another religion, 90 percent had previous education in that religion, while 10 percent had no such prior education. With regard to other religions—but not to Islam—there was also a clearer relationship between someone’s prior study of the religion’s sacred text and their offer of education on that religion. Just as with the Bible, knowing the texts makes it easier to offer education and exposure to others.

As these charts clearly illustrate, an Episcopal church leader’s education in other faiths is almost a pre-requisite for education in our parishes about other religions. But it is also interesting to note that only around 55 percent of ordained...
and lay leaders with prior education in other religions actually offer some form of education about other religions in their parishes.

Sometimes, not offering interreligious education is due to geographic distance from people of other faiths. But 122 participants offered other barriers including lack of time, lack of knowledge, lack of interest (among parishioners or in themselves), and lack of a rationale or priority. The most frequently cited reason for not offering interfaith education was that educating and forming people in their Christian faith was a first priority, and that most people did not even understand their own Christian faith sufficiently.

A majority of participants (83 percent) were mildly to strongly in favor of interfaith education—either to begin offering it or to expand on what has already been offered. These respondents not only desire more forums and speakers, but want their parishes to get involved directly with other faith communities in programs such as joint community worship services, shared fellowship meals, joint outreach projects, visits to other houses of worship, and discussions.

Leaders’ prior education in other faiths increases the likelihood of interreligious interaction. Nearly two-thirds of those with prior education were involved in interfaith associations, and 40 percent of those with previous education had partnered with congregations of other faiths in some shared experience.

Education of parish members also has a direct effect on interreligious interaction. Two-thirds of those who had offered education about another religious tradition at their parishes were also involved in interfaith associations and half had partnered directly with other non-Christian congregations. The ripple effect of educating church leaders about other religions is clear. But what does this have to do with Christian mission and ministry?

**Interfaith Relations and Evangelistic Witness**

Let us return to the earlier discussion of Christian mission in a religiously pluralistic world. John Paul II’s encyclical, Redemptoris Missio, can once again be instructive about why interreligious education and interaction matter for Christian mission:

*In the light of the economy of salvation, the Church sees no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in interreligious dialogue. Instead, she feels the need to link the two in the context of her mission ad gentes. These two elements must maintain both their intimate connection and their distinctiveness; therefore they should not be confused, manipulated or regarded as identical, as though they were interchangeable.*

A variety of church leaders, missionaries, and scholars can testify to the truth of this claim, that interreligious dialogue and proclamation of Christ are intimately intertwined. Respect and understanding of the other precedes and helps frame our sharing of the Gospel. Hearing the other helps us clarify who we are. As this quotation also illuminates, we cannot do one task without the other—and, while they overlap, they are not identical. Interfaith relations and evangelistic witness can be said to exist in creative tension with each other. In the midst of such interfaith relationships and dialogue, our proclamation of the Gospel may not yield many converts. But, as David Gortner has elsewhere stated, conversion is not the point of evangelism. Proclamation of God’s good news is the point of evangelism and is the work of Christians in both word and deed. Conversion is God’s business. Entering relationships, respectfully hearing who others are, and being clear about who we are comprise the full art and spiritual work invited by John Paul II, as well as by Rowan Williams and Mark Hanson.

Constructive interfaith relations can be fostered through a wide range of connections and events, beginning with invitations between clergy or lay leaders to offer instruction, pulpit exchanges, interfaith prayer services on days of remembrance or other holidays, participation in interfaith alliances for social outreach or action, and specific partnerships between congregations for the sake of public ministry.

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invitations between clergy or lay leaders to offer instruction, pulpit exchanges, interfaith prayer services on days of remembrance or other holidays, participation in interfaith alliances for social outreach or action, and specific partnerships between congregations for the sake of public ministry. While 56 percent of respondents were involved in an interfaith organization, association, or network, and 51 percent had invited other religious leaders to preach or teach, only 36 percent had partnered actively with congregations of other faiths (most being Jewish or Muslim) in some shared experience such as those named above as wishes. It certainly requires greater effort to pursue and support interreligious collaborations between congregations—we have likely experienced sufficient challenges in bringing together neighboring Christian congregations for shared events.

It is certainly easier to arrange visits of single leaders from one congregation to another, or to meet as leaders with one another in interfaith organizations, than it is to plan for events and sustained activities between congregations. And yet, relationships and mutual understanding cannot easily be strengthened simply by a visit from a leader of another faith tradition, or by leaders engaging only one another in conversation. That is why the 2012 General Convention of the Episcopal Church adopted a resolution “that all members of the Church be encouraged to be involved actively and appropriately on every possible level in interreligious work such as… services, prayer groups, educational programs, community service, and study groups.”

So, who engages in interreligious work matters. Involvement is needed both at the grassstops and the grassroots. But how this engagement takes place also matters. “Sharing our story with others must be part of a dialogue in which we listen to the stories others share with us, whether from places of little faith or from other religious paths. The religious diversity of the 21st century, like that of the early centuries of Christianity, calls us to hold together the multiple tasks of listening, learning, and bearing witness to Christ.”

Sharing our story with others must be part of a dialogue in which we listen to the stories others share with us, whether from places of little faith or from other religious paths. The religious diversity of the 21st century, like that of the early centuries of Christianity, calls us to hold together the multiple tasks of listening, learning, and bearing witness to Christ. This view is confined neither to the Episcopal Church nor to the Anglican Communion, whose Lambeth Conference called for dialogue based on mutual respect and as a medium of authentic witness in 1988. Rather, it is part of a broader Christian movement that began in 1965 at the Second Vatican Council. That year, in a new Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, Nostra Aetate (“In Our Time”), Paul VI proclaimed that the Church “rejects nothing that is true and holy in [other] religions” and re-affirmed the dignity and human rights of all persons, regardless of their race or religion. Two decades later, the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians (subsequently renamed the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue), issued “The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission.” This document describes the evangelizing mission of the Church as a “single but complex and articulated reality” involving both presence and witness.

Thus, Christian mission and ministry to people of other faiths involves a complex process of listening, learning, identity formation, and evangelistic witness. Yet of 322 survey respondents, only 51 percent (165) have provided instruction or training in practices of everyday evangelistic discourse and sharing faith stories. The survey suggests that this is an area needing great attention in the Church.


One survey question asked, “What would you like to see happen in terms of evangelism in your parish?” We received 204 written replies. In general, those responding wanted “more of it,” greater witness to the Gospel and to God’s love for all persons, more authenticity and enthusiasm in our relationship with God, more listening to others and sharing of personal stories, and/or more community service and outreach to youth and other groups. A very frequent answer was “more comfort” on the part of people being able to talk about their faith; the words “comfort” or “comfortable” appeared in 24 replies (12 percent of 204) and were implicit in many more. Several respondents said their parishioners were reluctant to discuss their faith with the unchurched due to public perceptions about Christianity created by the religious right. Respondents also requested tools for building the confidence and evangelistic capacity of parishioners.

Most responses implicitly addressed evangelism in relation to a secular world. However, 38 responses mentioned evangelism in connection with persons of other faiths, including 11 that specifically mentioned Muslims or Islam. Most of the 38 focused on relating to religious “others” in the spirit of love, acceptance, respect, and finding common ground. Only five respondents explicitly said that Muslims should convert to Christianity.

“Evangelism” remains an uncomfortable term for many in the Episcopal Church, perhaps more than even most mainline Protestant denominations. Thus, some respondents were eager to distinguish evangelism from proselytization, while others thought the two were identical and identically wrong. Several sought to re-conceptualize evangelism, correctly unhooking it from conversion and church growth, but further diminishing it to wordless proclamation by living one’s faith through example, especially through service.

The following are some examples of how VTS-related ordained and lay leaders consider the term “evangelism”:

“Most people, religious or not, will hear our behavior before they hear our voice. My prayer for evangelism is that our parish continue to seek out and engage the poor, the sick and the needy as well as the rich, the pompous and the greedy. The word and example of Jesus Christ, God in the Flesh, is our most potent means of achieving that goal.”

“I love to find new ways to encourage our parishioners in their evangelistic efforts outside of simply how they live their lives. How might we encourage them to speak more with others about how their faith impacts and influences their lives and how they live?”

“I personally do not believe in seeking to convert Jews and Muslims to Christianity since we all worship the same God.”

“To see more Muslims are coming to know Jesus, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall [bow] and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Lord.”

“I serve two very small, struggling churches. Evangelism for us is reaching out to members of our community -- many of whom are in precarious financial situations. We minister to their needs, and provide a witness in this very challenged community.”

“We are restarting a church, so evangelism is very essential...We are talking a lot about evangelism and establishing an invitational culture. Evangelism is all about relationships and sharing good news with those around us. With all the brokenness and heartache in the world, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is desperately needed....”

“Please define ‘evangelism.’”

“‘Evangelism’ is another word with a lot of baggage; it has a history of proclaiming a deficiency in the ‘other’...I’d like to see people secure enough ..... to have a more ‘come and see’ attitude rather than ‘you are deficient.’”
The wide range of responses suggests that this is an opportune time for Church leaders to revisit the theology of evangelism and then find new ways to apply it. The differing perspectives on evangelism expressed in the survey suggest that a major challenge for the Church going forward will be learning how to fully engage with anybody outside the Church, including those in other religious traditions.

Our survey results reveal that evangelism is intimately intertwined with interreligious education and relationship. Among the 51 percent of church leaders who reported offering training in evangelism and the sharing of faith stories in their parishes, nearly two-thirds had previously studied Islam or another religion—and nearly two-thirds also offered forums about Islam or other faiths. Church leaders who did not offer training in evangelism in their parishes were also less likely to offer education about other religions, and were less likely to be involved in interfaith associations. Evangelism and interreligious engagement mutually reinforce each other.

### Proximity and Parish Size

Let us return to the question of proximity of Episcopal parishes to other religion’s houses of worship. Proximity increases the likelihood of interreligious relationship. And parish size is closely related to proximity to non-Christian houses of worship—particularly, proximity to mosques and Islamic centers. Parish size did indeed make a difference in interfaith education and relationships. Among our respondents, smaller “family size” congregations (average attendance less than 50) were most likely to be more than 20 miles away, and “pastoral size” parishes (average attendance 50-150) were most likely to be 10 to 20 miles away from places of Muslim worship and community gathering. Respondents from smaller “family size” parishes (average attendance 50 or less) were least likely to engage in education about Islam or in Muslim-Christian cooperative events, while those from larger “resource size” parishes (average attendance over 350) were most likely to offer education about Islam and collaboration with Muslims in ministry. Interestingly, respondents from smaller congregations were also least likely to indicate evidence of “Islamophobia” in their congregations.

### Points of Theological Similarity and Difference

Where do we begin conversation with those religiously different from us? In a 2009 Pew Forum study broadly measuring the outlook of American Christians on Islam, only 19 percent of American Catholics and 15 percent of American Protestants said that Islam was similar to their own religion. Our survey was more nuanced in that we chose to ask specifically where our respondents thought the similarities and differences between the two religions are to be found, i.e. in which points of belief and practice. The responses, examined collectively, create a sensible map for dialogue. Using a scale from most different (1) to most similar (4), the 290 respondents to this question indicated stronger similarity than difference between Islam and Christianity in the role of personal spiritual practice (65 percent rated this very or somewhat similar), the purpose of communal prayer and ritual (63 percent),

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and ethics and morality (62 percent). Responses were evenly divided regarding views of Muslim and Christian similarities and differences regarding the nature of God and regarding war and violence. But the greatest differences between Islam and Christianity were perceived to be the two faiths’ teachings about the role of women (84 percent rated them very or somewhat different) and about sin and redemption (68 percent rated them different).

In written comments, many of those surveyed qualified their answers, noting that the wide range of theological viewpoints within each religion made simple comparisons between religions difficult if not impossible. A few examples:

“This may be an impossible exercise, because Christian and Muslim teachings vary enormously among themselves...I suspect, individually, many Christians are closer to Muslims, and vice versa, than they are to other Christians.”

“It is difficult to compare as there are many different types and practices of Islam, as in Christianity and Judaism.”

“It is almost impossible to answer this question. Both Islam and Christianity are divided into so many different sects and schools of thought that any one generalization falls short of providing an accurate description of the diversity of faith and practice.”

This further goes to show the importance of getting to know our neighbors, and of coming to know ourselves more fully. Only in conversation and relationship will we learn to overcome stereotypes and develop a more nuanced understanding of others—and, as a consequence, of ourselves.
“Islamophobia” is a widely used, if controversial, word. The survey asked people simply to respond to two questions about the presence or absence of Islamophobia in their parishes and communities, without defining it. Our survey participants responded with a mixture of feeling to the term (“a strong word;” “define Islamophobia”).

“Islamophobia” has become a widely used term in both academic and public discourse. It has been used widely in the scholarly literature in the social sciences, has appeared in the mainstream news media, and is utilized by the United Nations, European Union, and U.S. State Department in connection with their human rights work, often in conjunction with efforts to counter anti-Semitism as well.

Despite some misgivings about the word, more than a third of survey respondents (37 percent) reported evidence of Islamophobia in their congregations, and nearly half (47 percent) reported the phenomenon in their surrounding communities. Church leaders reported comments made by parishioners about Muslims that many would consider stereotypical (“all Muslims are anti-Christian”), fearful (“they are out to get us”), disrespectful (“nasty emails, jokes”), or hostile (“outright hatred”). Such parishioner comments equated all Muslims with terrorists or extremists. Regarding their surrounding communities, church leaders reported not only demeaning comments, but some acts of violence against Muslim property and against Muslim persons.

Concerns about Islam are not the same as Islamophobia. Some respondents to these questions mentioned parishioner concerns about extremists based on factual evidence (“Christians in the country I serve have been attacked and had their churches burned by Muslims, so there is some real fear here”). Others observed that there are various strands of Islam, some but not all of them violent.

Replies to these two survey questions brought to light at least two vital issues in our relations with Muslims. First, where does legitimate, understandable fear of Islamist extremism end and excessive, irrational fear (“phobia”) of all who follow Islam begin? And second, what is an appropriate pastoral response to expressions of both legitimate and excessive fears?