

## *Muslims & Christians: Together Loving God & Loving Each Other*

Dear Friend of A Common Word Alberta

It is with sadness and utter shock that we received the news of the murder of four members of a Muslim family in London Ontario. We call out to God for mercy on this whole city, on those grieving loss, those now living in fear and those walking in solidarity with them. It is reassuring to see the support our Muslim Community is receiving from the majority of Canadians who love and respect Muslims as we in ACWAb do.

In the face of great evil, the Psalms call us to Lament. Here from Psalms 10 we read, "***Their mouths are filled with cursing and deceit and oppression. (Hate speech) Their eyes stealthily watch for the helpless (means the crime was premeditated). Rise up O Lord, O God, lift up your hand, do not forget the oppressed (Muslim people in Canada especially the women) Why do the wicked renounce God and say in their hearts, "You will not call us to account". But [God] you do see! Indeed, you note the trouble and grief that you may take it into your hands; the helpless commit themselves to you, (Muslims are doing their prayers more fervently today) you have been the helper of the orphan (the lone survivor.) The Lord is king forever and ever ... O Lord you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed.***

Some have said that this is not our Canada, but the Psalm of Lament compels us to name the evil that is among us. It is very real! This **is** Canada. Hate crimes in Canada took a huge jump up in 2017 and we likely know why. Today many Canadian Muslims are feeling unsafe, angry, terrified and hoping their young children don't hear about this. But sadly they are not surprised. Many have been the victims of hate crimes already. It is like a huge iceberg of hate crimes our Muslim brothers and sisters are already experiencing, and every once in a while reexperience through highly visible and publicized acts of Islamophobia motivated violence. Events such as the [Quebec City mosque shooting](#) of 2017 or the recent [London murders of June 2021](#) show the visible tip of the proverbial iceberg revealing that Canada, sadly, has many who are prejudiced against Islam and Muslims<sup>1</sup>.

Donna Entz, the soon to retire founder of A Common Word Alberta shares this experience:

Monday evening I walked with a Muslim friend. I cried when I thought about her

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<sup>1</sup> Results from a [2016 Forum Poll](#) revealed that 41 per cent of Canadian adults expressed some level of bias against identifiable racial groups, with Muslims having the highest negative rating at 28 per cent.

Another survey published in 2016, by [the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants](#), found that only 32 per cent of Ontarians had a "positive impression" of Islam.

The following year, a survey done for Radio Canada revealed that almost one in four Canadians would favour a ban on Muslim immigration with the level of support for this ban rising to 32 per cent in Québec. Most respondents (51 per cent in Canada, 57 per cent in Québec) felt presence of Muslims in this country made them "somewhat" or "very worried" about security. *Statistics from The Conversation* <https://theconversation.com/muslim-family-killed-in-terror-attack-in-london-ontario-islamophobic-violence-surfaces-once-again-in-canada-162400>



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10-year-old daughter. She's has worked hard to instill pride in her daughter about being Muslim. There are so many things she can't tell her. Now this!

There is a woman who lived in our apartments for 20 years. She looks much like I do and just younger than I. I chat with her whenever we meet. That is all. One night she realized I had studied Islam and for an hour she asked me question after question about Muslims and I answered the best I could. Finally I said, "So all these years you have lived with about 1/3 of the people in these buildings being Muslim. Did you ever ask them about their faith?"

"Oh, no," she said, "that would not be proper." She had refused to pick up the negative stereotypes about Muslims, so if she had engaged them she would have been very respectful. That is our Canadian problem! Political correct-ness and risk aversion! Prime Minister Trudeau said on Tuesday that we should smile when we pass Muslim people. No, No! That is not enough! Stop and ask about their school, their children, their work, where they shop and their faith. These days it would surely be appropriate to stop and ask whether they are okay after the London news.

We have a longstanding tradition and belief in Canada that matters of faith are "private." As Donna's example above shows, her neighbor thought talking about religion was not proper. We humbly suggest that given true Muslim and true Christian commitment to "make a difference in our world through our faith" that talking back and forth with each other about our faith is not only proper is it necessary. Without such dialogue we have little hope of diminishing misconceptions and unhelpful stereotypes that fuel Islamophobia.

By now we know the limitations of politicians to change things for the good. A Common Word Alberta has as our mandate to get Muslims and ordinary Canadians – especially those who identify as Christians to talk with each other respectfully and with genuine curiosity learning about "the other." We have found and strongly believe that "knowing the other personally" is a very good path to diminishing animosity filled stereotypes and misinformation that fuels hatred.

Thank you for your participation in A Common Word Alberta and at this time of national shame and lament we suggest that both Muslims and Non-Muslim Canadians reach out to each other and talk about the things that threaten to divide us, yes, matters of faith ... things that rather than divide us can unite us.

The National Council of Canadian Muslims has called for a national action summit on Islamophobia. Visit <https://www.nccm.ca/london/> to sign the petition.

Dale Ibsen (secretary of A Common Word Alberta) on behalf of our members

