

An agreement for dialogue between the Anglican Communion and al-Azhar al-Sharif

We affirm the importance of building on the excellent relations between the Anglican Communion and al-Azhar al-Sharif.

We acknowledge the brotherly relations between the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar, Dr Mohamed Sayed Tantawy and Dr George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the President of the Anglican Communion.

We believe that friendship which overcomes religious, ethnic and national differences is a gift of the Creator in whom we all believe.

We recognise that both sides need to accept each other in a straightforward way so as to be able to convey the message of peace to the world.

We believe that direct dialogue results in restoration of the image of each in the eyes of the other.

Continuing from the visit of Dr Carey to al-Azhar al-Sharif in October 1995 and the visit of Dr Tantawy, the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar al Sharif, to Lambeth Palace in 1997 and the return visit of Dr Carey to al Azhar al-Sharif in November 19991,

and because of our common faith in God and our responsibility to witness against indifference to religion on the one hand and religious fanaticism on the other, we hope that we may contribute to international efforts to achieve justice, peace and the welfare of all humanity,

resourced by the positive experiences in our long history as Christians and Muslims living together both in Egypt and the United Kingdom and many other parts of the world.

In consequence of this, Dr George Carey, the President of the Anglican Communion, has appointed the following members to the Interfaith Commission:

- The Revd Canon Dr Christopher Lamb
- The Rt Revd Mouneer Hanna Anis, Bishop in Egypt with North Africa
- The Rt Revd David Smith, Bishop of Bradford, UK

The members of the Permanent Committee of al-Azhar al-Sharif for Dialogue on Monotheistic Religions are:

- Sheikh Fawzy El Zefzaf, President
- Dr Ali El Samman, Vice President
- Ambassador Dr Ahmed Maray
- Dr Mustaffa Al Shukfah
- Sheikh Abu Agour
- Ambassador Nabil Badre

Representatives of both sides met in al-Azhar on 10 and 11 September 2001 and discussed the proposal for the dialogue between the Anglican Communion and al-Azhar al-Sharif with the hope of achieving the following goals:

- To encourage Anglicans to understand Islam and to encourage Muslims to understand the Christian faith.
- To share together in solving problems and conflicts that happen sometimes between Muslims and Christians in different parts of the world, and to encourage religious leaders to use their influence for the purpose of reconciliation and peace making.
- To work together against injustice and the abuse of human rights among different nationalities and to spread the good teaching of both Islam and Christianity.
- To encourage institutions on both sides to play a positive role in development.

To achieve these goals the following decisions were taken:

- A Joint Committee will be established from both sides composed of a Chairman and two members from each side already appointed. It may be possible in future to add new members but each side will inform the other about membership.
- This joint Committee will meet at least once a year in Egypt and the United Kingdom alternately. Each delegation will cover its expenses for travel and accommodation and could meet more than once a year if necessary.
- At the end of each meeting a Press release will be issued. The text of the communiqué must be agreed by the Joint Committee before publication. No information about papers presented to the Joint Committee will be released outside it without the agreement of both sides.

Signed by:

The Most Revd and Rt Hon Dr George Carey Archbishop of Canterbury

The Rt Revd Mouneer Hanna Anis Bishop in Egypt with North Africa

The Revd Canon Dr Christopher Lam

His Eminence Sheikh Mohamed Sayed Tantawy Grand Imam of al-Azhar

Sheikh Fawzy El Zefzaf President, Permanent Committee of al-Azhar for Dialogue with the Monotheistic Religions

Dr Ali El Samman Vice President, Permanent Committee of al-Azhar for Dialogue with the Monotheistic Religions