



August 2010

Dear Colleagues,

As interfaith educators who work with rabbinical students from all denominations, we are deeply dismayed by some of the ignorance, confusion and intolerance we have heard expressed in the national conversation surrounding the so-called “Ground Zero Mosque.” We are especially concerned when we hear such sentiments coming from within the Jewish community.

Whatever happens with the proposed community center in lower Manhattan, the controversy has highlighted a question that, in the post 9/11 world, comes enmeshed in strong emotion: Is the American ideal of religious liberty—an ideal fundamental to the health of our democracy—expansive enough to include Muslim Americans?

We urge rabbis across the country to speak out against the bigotry that has erupted in the midst of this controversy and to assert leadership on the issue of religious pluralism. As Jews, we know all too well the destructive power of hate speech and other acts of prejudice. Given our community’s history, we should be at the forefront of efforts to ensure that religious minorities can practice their traditions freely as mandated by the Constitution.

We encourage our students and colleagues in the rabbinate—Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, Renewal and independent—to consider using this September 11th, also *Shabbat Shuva*, as a time for both commemoration and reflection. In addition to memorializing the innocent victims of September 11th, we ask that time be dedicated to conversation about our own fears and prejudices, on the need to educate ourselves about Islam (including building relationships with Muslims in our communities), and on the role Jews might play in helping to create a more inclusive and just society.

We are posting resources of general interest on www.multifaithworld.org. We are also developing a collection of sample sermons and discussion outlines. If you have contributions you would like to share, please send them to nancykreim@gmail.com.

We look forward to hearing from you.

L'shana tova,

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