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US Christian leaders endorse Muslim call for common ground
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By Chris Herlinger

New York, 22 November (ENI)--US Christian leaders, including traditional Protestants and evangelical Christians, have endorsed a document that responds positively to a call by Muslim leaders seeking common ground between Christian and Islamic religious traditions.

Nearly 300 Christian leaders have now endorsed the document, "Loving God and Neighbour Together". It calls for both Christian and Muslim leaders to commit themselves to "the earnest work of determining how God would have us fulfill the requirement that we love God and one another".

The statement was published as a full-page advertisement in the 18 November edition of The New York Times newspaper. It was endorsed by, among others, John Thomas, the president and general minister of the United Church of Christ, and Harvey Cox, the theologian based at Harvard Divinity School, as well as by prominent evangelical leaders such as Rick Warren, author of "The Purpose Driven Life". Also signing was Robert Schuller, the founder of the California-based ministry, Crystal Cathedral/Hour of Power.

Four Yale Divinity School scholars including the school's dean, Harold Attridge, originally endorsed the Christian document following the release of a widely-publicised October 2007 letter, "A Common Word Between Us and You", by 138 Muslim clerics, intellectuals and scholars.

That Islamic document, the Christian leaders said, identified "some core common ground between Christianity and Islam which lies at the heart of our respective faiths as well as at the heart of the most ancient Abrahamic faith, Judaism".

The leaders added, "We receive the open letter as a Muslim hand of conviviality and cooperation extended to Christians worldwide. In this response we extend our own Christian hand in return, so that together with all other human beings we may live in peace and justice as we seek to love God and our neighbours."

In a statement, Attridge, the Yale dean, said, "In a climate where the voices of extremism and intolerance are heard loud and clear, it is important that men and women of good will on both sides of that religious fault line reach out and affirm the values that they share."

He noted that the Muslim document "presented an extraordinary opportunity to effect that outreach and further constructive communication between the religious leadership of the Christian and Muslim worlds". [382 words]

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