INTERFAITH DIALOGUE IN AMERICA: A CASE STUDY IN MORMON-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Rachel L. Sage, B.A.
Thesis Advisor: John L. Esposito, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

The dynamic relationship between Mormons and Muslims serves as a unique example of how two religious minorities in America have come together to build bridges of understanding. While this may seem an unlikely pairing for inter-religious dialogue, Mormons and Muslims share many common bonds that help mend religious division and promote community awareness. Similarities such as the moral and ethical codes of the two religions as well as a lack of understanding among many Americans of their religious practices can help to bring Mormons and Muslims together in interfaith dialogue.

American society embraces religious plurality and freedom. However Mormons and Muslims still experience religious discrimination and prejudice. While many steps have been taken to increase awareness of their beliefs, they still struggle to be socially integrated in America today. By increasing interaction with one another, Mormons and Muslims are not only able to create positive community alliances but also have greater opportunity to dispel misinformation that might otherwise come from less reliable sources.
This research proposes that Mormon-Muslim interfaith dialogue can make a positive contribution to faith relations in America. Much of this hypothesis is based on a five-year case study by this researcher, which brought together Mormons and Muslims for inter-religious dialogue and community outreach. Based on these first-hand accounts, this research reveals that Mormons and Muslims are able to form unique relationships based primarily on the following conclusions:

1. Both groups share similar moral beliefs, which set them apart socially from mainstream American society.

2. While much religious doctrine is not shared between Mormons and Muslims, there are a number of doctrinal similarities which are beneficial in building common bonds.

3. Both Mormons and Muslims feel the need to dispel misconceptions about their respective faiths.

In addition, this research provides discussion of other Mormon-Muslim interfaith issues, such as obstacles faced and possible solutions, reasons why such relationships are beneficial for communities at large, and the progress of this interfaith relationship. Finally, recommendations are made for future progress to strengthen the bonds between Mormons and Muslims and how society overall will benefit from this union.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my aunt Leone G. Dumire. This research would not have been possible without her love, support and prayers. Thank you for believing in me Auntie.

This is also dedicated to the memory of my mother and father who both passed away during the time of my research. I honor their memory by persevering in the face of opposition. Thank you mom and dad for instilling in me the courage to never give up.

This study is in large part due to the foundational work done by several exceptional scholars, namely, Dr. Chad Emmett, Dr. Lloyd Miller, Dr. Daniel C. Peterson, and Dr. Debra Richardson. I give my sincere gratitude for not only their scholarship but for their encouragement and support in pursuing the topic of Mormon-Muslim relations.

Special thanks to Allison Carpenter, the co-founder of Muslims and Latter-day Saints United for Values (MLUV), and to Imam Yahya Hendi of Georgetown University for always giving full support to our events from the Muslim Student Association.
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CHAPTER 1
THE MORMON-MUSLIM COMPARISON

Introduction

Despite their great doctrinal differences, Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormons)\(^1\) and Muslims share a natural affinity based on similar family-based values and conservative social practices. By setting aside differences in the context of working together for the greater good, Mormon-Muslim interfaith collaboration benefits America as a whole. “Mormonism is fundamentally different from Islam, but they share experiences as religious minorities in America.”\(^2\)

Mormons provide an example to minority faiths in America, particularly Muslims that face persecution. In less than two generations, Mormons have shed their status as reviled outcasts to become integrated in mainstream society while maintaining their faith. Despite persisting widespread

\(^1\) The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is referred to as “The Mormon Church”, “The LDS Church” or in some cases “The Church” in this paper. Mormonism is used to denote both doctrine and culture of the church. When referring to Church members, the term “Latter-day Saints”, “LDS” or “Mormons” are used interchangeably. Official citation guidelines for the church can be accessed online at: <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/style-guide>.

misconceptions, Mormons have withstood prejudice and overcome persecution to make a place for themselves within the diverse tapestry of American society.

Early Mormons were persecuted and driven from five different states until finally fleeing to the western territories where they eventually founded the state of Utah. Journalist Ken Verdoia has observed that in the early years of Mormonism, Americans exhibited similar fear and misunderstanding to what Muslims face today, “In the 19th century to call someone a Mormon was akin to calling someone a Muslim terrorist [today].” Today Muslims face similar persecution and are seeking to find a balance between their faith and their place in America. “Both [Mormons and Muslims] have encountered setbacks and open discrimination in their attempts to belong to and become part and parcel of America.” Muslim leaders have acknowledged this shared understanding of persecution. Maher Hathout, a senior advisor to the Muslim Public Affairs Council in Los Angeles noted, "We are very aware of the history of Mormons as a group that was chastised in America…they can be a good

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3 On October 27, 1838, Governor Lilburn Boggs issued the Extermination Order that requires all Mormons to leave Missouri or be killed. Dozens of Mormons were massacred.


model for any group that feels alienated." When considering the obstacles of Muslim relations in America, Mormons stand out as a natural role model and ally.

Mormons have made tremendous progress over the last one hundred and seventy-five years, and the evidence of their success may be best encapsulated by the fact that there are currently 16 Mormons holding office in the U.S. 110th Congress.7

However, during the 2008 Presidential campaign, both the Democratic and Republican candidates found themselves facing the impact of religious discrimination upon voter attitudes. Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney was scrutinized for being a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.8 A Gallup Poll found that seventeen percent of Americans claimed they would not vote for a “generally well-qualified” candidate if that candidate was a Mormon, equating the term “Mormon” as “unfavorable” for a

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7 In the 110th Congress (2007-2008), 11 Latter-day Saints served in the House, three from Utah, three from California, and one each from Arizona, Idaho, Nevada, and New Mexico and the territorial delegate of American Samoa. Five Senators of the 110th congress are Latter-day Saints: Senator Gordon Smith (R-Oregon), Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Robert F. Bennett (R-Utah); Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), and Harry Reid (D-Nevada).

political leader. Democrat Barack Obama found himself in the precarious position of 'defending' himself from rumors suggesting that he was Muslim. A follow-up poll revealed that 58% of Americans said they knew little or nothing about Islam's practices, while 51% had little or no awareness of the precepts and practices of Mormonism. Each of these situations demonstrates that Mormons and Muslims are often misunderstood by mainstream America.

Historical comparisons between Islam and Mormonism have traditionally focused upon critically undermining the tenets of both faiths. Members of the Mormon religion were frequently the target of cryptomohammedanism, an Orientalist socio-cultural derision that attacks a Western religious viewpoint by associating it with Islamic dogma. The most vocal proponents of these negative comparisons were other Christians. In 1830, Obadiah Dogberry, the editor of the Palmyra Reflector, called Joseph Smith “this second Mahomet”

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13 Joseph Smith was the founder and first prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
and later clarified his criticism, stating, “it is only in their [Joseph Smith and Muhammad’s] ignorance and impudence that a parallel can be found.”

In 1834, Pastor E.D. Howe stated that Joseph Smith’s “ignorance and stupidity” were equal to Muhammad’s. Such derisions permitted the speaker to attack both religions simultaneously, accusing each of false teachings and tyranny. This form of religious denunciation was not limited to The Church’s leaders and has been used to attack many Christian leaders by those holding conflicting Christian views.

Today, the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and misinformation continues. The Media often misrepresents members of polygamous sects as “Mormons” even going so far as to compare Mitt Romney, a respected Governor of Massachusetts with Warren Jeffs, a convicted pedophile and leader of a polygamous sect that has no connection to the LDS Church.

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16 Cryptomohammedanism accuses religious opponents of being “secret followers of Muhammad.” In the case of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the extension of the Orientalist criticism expands the negative label traditionally focused upon Islam, and other elements of Eastern culture, to the Mormon Church in order to isolate the church socially and politically.

Muslims can also relate to media misrepresentation as Muslims struggle to draw a line between Islam and terrorism in the media.

However, the comparisons between the two religions are not solely the development of vitriolic detractors. The LDS and Muslim communities share significant doctrinal similarities that highlight a shared heritage, and a growing collection of religious scholars have recognized these ties without the negative connotations of past criticism. In light of these similarities, Bruce Kinney dubbed Mormonism the “Islam of America,” contending that the two religions have many similarities.\(^{18}\) Kinney’s words were echoed by religious scholar Eduard Meyer, who explained, “Mormonism... excited my interest at an early age before all else because of the surprising analogy, extending even to the smallest details, between it and the fundamental drives, external forms, and historical development of Islam.”\(^{19}\) The acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the LDS Church, Boyd K. Packer stated, “Church members and Muslims share similar high standards of decency, temperance, and morality. We have so much in common...the Church and many within Islam increasingly share natural affinities.”\(^{20}\)


\(^{19}\) As quoted in Hugh Nibley, “Islam and Mormonism – A Comparison,” *Ensign Magazine*, March 1972, 55-64. The Ensign is the official periodical of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

\(^{20}\) Boyd K. Packer, “Building Bridges of Understanding: The Church and the World of
Recent comments reflect the growing recognition of these shared values by members of both religions. In 2007, an interfaith event held in southern California drew considerable interest from the local Mormon and Muslim communities. One visitor noted, “A Mormon living in an Islamic society would be very comfortable.” This view was echoed by a Muslim guest, who stated, “When I go to a Mormon church I feel at ease… When I heard the President [of the Church] speak a few years ago, if I’d closed my eyes I’d have thought he was an imam.” These comments reflect a growing awareness that a comparison of the two religions no longer immediately constitutes ridicule and instead may point to genuine confluences in faith and practice.

Recognition of this shared burden of discrimination and of the common beliefs held by members of these two religions forms the basis for a concerted effort to broaden and strengthen inter-religious communication between the Mormon and Muslim communities. This project provides a case study of Mormon-Muslim inter-religious dialogue, allowing for an evaluation of the obstacles, commonalities, and potential for such an effort. The researcher expects to identify the following as prominent thematic milestones that highlight

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2. Ibid.
the potential for a growing Mormon-Muslim interfaith relationship: social
dialogue; values-based community efforts building humanitarian coalitions
through volunteerism; and political activism.

These doctrinal similarities within both communities show that socio-
cultural norms can be identified through the expression of these values. Dr.
Debra Richardson reiterated some of these shared beliefs, stating as follows:

Both faithful Mormons and Muslims are commanded to fast, pray, pay
alms (tithing), be chaste in thought and action and modest in dress,
follow similar dietary laws, read scriptures, worship God and submit to
His will, serve and love their families and others, bear testimony, follow
prophets and live pure lives.23

Victor Begg, President of the Muslim Unity Center in Bloomfield Hills
Michigan, noted that the importance of the family is a common thread between
Mormons and Muslims saying, “I was impressed that [Mormons] talked a lot
about the family… Islam builds its whole superstructure around family.”24 This
chapter focuses upon three similarities: foundational spiritual beliefs, traditional
family values and sexual morality, and health codes. These doctrinal and
social similarities lay the foundation for interfaith relations between Mormons
and Muslims, providing members of both groups with a common ground that


may enable future efforts focused upon the cultivation of inter-religious dialogue.

**Foundational Spiritual Beliefs**

Practitioners of both faiths claim belief in the existence of prophets and their basic role as the earthly voice of God. “Both Mormons and Muslims, perhaps more than any other two peoples in the religious world today, greatly emphasize the importance of prophets.”

Both religions were founded by men who were critical of the dominant culture’s religious views. Both men emphasized a genealogical link to Abraham and the importance of lineage.

Furthermore, each of these men claimed to be prophets of the one, true God. The basic tenets developed by these men according to divine inspiration share additional similarities premised upon the idea that God can and will choose to share His wisdom with His followers. In fact, both religions can find passages within their respective sacred texts that highlight God’s intent to share His plan with humanity. In the book of Isaiah, God revealed that He would share his wisdom.

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26 One example of the importance of lineage in the LDS Church is the “Patriarchal Blessing” which is given by a Patriarch of the LDS Church. The blessing is recorded and a copy is given to the recipient to read throughout one’s life as a type of guide. One of the major functions of the blessing is to pronounce which tribe of Israel the recipient comes from. This is one interpretation of the “gathering of Israel”, that as each person comes unto Christ through baptism into the Church, they are gathered spiritually unto the “House of God”.

27 Isaiah is found within the Holy Bible. The LDS Church accepts the *The Holy Bible* to be...
knowledge “precept upon precept; line upon line; here a little and there a little.” In his Articles of Faith, Joseph Smith repeated this belief in God’s revelatory intent, stating “We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.” The Quran verbalizes a similar statement by God, in which he has “rehearsed it to thee in slow, well-arranged stages gradually.” Joseph Smith and Mohammed shared a common function of acting as instruments by which God revealed knowledge to His followers.

This foundational belief in God’s intent to reveal truths generates a significant socio-religious obligation to maintain strict adherence to proscribed scriptural practices. Both religions emphasize the accomplishment of particular works to compliment faith. The five pillars of Islam dictate daily practice aimed at demonstrating submission to the almighty God. The five pillars are creed, prayer, fasting, alms and pilgrimage. The first pillar, creed, is contained within

the word of God as long as it is translated correctly. The official canonized version of the Bible used by the LDS Church is the King James Version.

28 Isaiah 28:10, As quoted in Amos Jackson, *The Correlation of Muslim Doctrine and Latter-Day Saint Doctrine, Based upon the Holy Scriptures* (Utah: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), 22.


the Arabic phrase “Ashhadu la illaha illa Allah wa ashahdu Muhammamadan rasool Allah (I testify that there is no god but God and Mohammad is His prophet)”\(^{31}\) and verbalizes the Muslim commitment to the worship of the one God and the status of Muhammad as His prophet.

Members of the LDS Church also believe in the existence of one supreme God and a concomitant obligation to bear testimony of His prophets. The first Sunday of every month, in lieu of traditional sermons, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are encouraged to declare their testimony from the pulpit. A common testimony often includes such declarations as “I know Joseph Smith was a prophet of God” and “I know God lives and loves us.”\(^{32}\) Dr. Debra Richardson notes that Mormon doctrine diverges from the traditional Christian theology of the trinity, “the separate unity of God the Eternal Father as that of one distinct being only and that we should be in constant worship of Him.”\(^{33}\) It is important to note that while the LDS and

\(^{31}\) Debra Richardson, *Bridges of Faith between Mormons and Muslims*, Chapter 5, 1.

\(^{32}\) Declaring one’s testimony or “Bearing one’s testimony” is believed to be an essential practice in the life of a Mormon. Members are encouraged to share their beliefs and convictions regarding the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by bearing their testimonies often in order to share knowledge and increase one’s own faith.

\(^{33}\) LDS doctrine describes God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit as three distinct and separate personages united in purpose only. Rather than accepting the traditional trinity doctrine as outlined in the Nicean Creed, which describes the trio as three-in-one beyond mortal comprehension, Mormonism describes it as a Godhead. The Godhead therefore is more of a triangle hierarchy with God at the top and Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit at His side in perfect synch and union of His will and purpose.
Muslim doctrines also share similar attitudes regarding respect for those of different faiths. Joseph Smith rejected the idea that only one group of “true” believers would be saved through divine intervention. He contended that, “one of the grand fundamental principles of Mormonism is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may.” In fact, Mormon tolerance for alternative religious viewpoints has distinguished the LDS Church. The declaration issued on February 15, 1978, by the first Presidency of the LDS Church iterated its religious tolerance by praising the spiritual leaders of alternative viewpoints, including Islam.

The great religious leaders of the world such as Muhammad, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato and others, received a portion of God’s light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals

Mormons are encouraged to interact with members of other religious viewpoints and even gain insight through these interactions. Dr. James Toronto, professor at Brigham Young University, describes in the following statement how Latter-day Saints can benefit from reading the Quran.

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34 Joseph Smith Teachings, 313, As quoted in Richardson, Chapter 1, 1.
35 Debra Richardson, Bridges of Faith between Mormons and Muslims, Chapter 1, 1.
There is much a Latter-Day Saint can gain from reading the Quran. Perhaps the biggest benefit of all is in developing an attitude of compassion and charity for our Muslim brothers and sisters who strive to live by the teachings of the Quran. If we understand what God has given them and see how closely these basic principles follow our own revealed truths, we can join together on a common righteous ground against the adversarial forces that confront us in today’s world. We can work on building those bridges of respect, understanding and righteous commitment to revealed truth that will allow for positive interactions and gospel discussions between us. This will permit us to look past the individual points of doctrine that bear any discrepancies and focus instead on the true principles that we both uphold.38

Similarly, within Islam, there are scriptures and historical precedence of inter-religious interactions. Despite the media attention garnered by Muslim extremists, Muslims are encouraged to compete to do good works with others, leaving doctrinal differences to God. The Quran outlines this concept as follows:

…if Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single People, but (His Plan is) to test you; so strive as a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah; It is He that will show you The truth of the matters In which ye dispute.39

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38 This quote is taken from a class handout entitled “What We Can Learn from The Koran”. To my knowledge it has not been published, however, to receive a copy of this 8 page document you may request a copy by contacting James A. Toronto through the BYU professor email system at <www.byu.edu>.

The Quran, in fact, clearly acknowledges the special relationship Muslims have with other religious groups such as Christians and Jews, in the following passage:

Those who believe (in the Qur’an), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures) and the Christians and the Sabians and any who believe in [God] and the last day and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.\(^{40}\)

Muslim scholar Imam Ali ibn Hazm advocated the study of truth regardless of its source, stating “I follow the truth wherever it leads me, making every effort to do so, without conforming to a single school.”\(^{41}\) Even the Arab occupation of parts of Iberian Europe during the Middle Ages did not result in mass conversion as Muslim leaders were content to grant freedom of expression to Christian and Jewish practitioners living within Islamic territories.\(^{42}\)

The remaining four pillars (prayer, fasting, alms and pilgrimage) outline the obligations of Muslims to enact their worship. Mormons are also required to obey God’s commandments in a similar display of faith and commitment. This section will serve as a quick over-view of these similarities.

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Muslims have the obligatory five daily prayers, Mormons have the commandment to pray morning and night. Muslims fast for the month of Ramadan, Mormons fast in a similar manner, completely without food or drink, the first Sunday of each month for a period of 24 hours. Muslims pay alms called zakat, an obligatory 2% of discretionary funds, Mormons pay 10% of their entire income. The Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca is indeed a culminating event in a Muslim’s life and the journey comes with additional preparation of worthiness and piety. Additionally, after such a pilgrimage many Muslims speak of renewed devotion and commitment to their faith. Similarly, Mormons have a pilgrimage to their Holy Temples, which is more of a spiritual journey than a physical one in that temples can now be found in most states and regions of the world. In fact, much like the Muslim journey to Mecca, much of the journey to a temple is in the preparation before hand of purity and worthiness. In order to enter the House of God, Mormons must go through two interviews with church leaders which confirm their commitment to living the high moral standards of the Church. Once in the temple, additional covenants and promises are made which are considered a commitment to live according to a higher law.

43 Book of Mormon, Alma 37:36.

44 Due to the sacred nature of the temple ordinances, members of The Church are encouraged not to speak about the ceremonies outside of the temple. Only members of The Church who qualify for a temple recommend, like a permit, may enter the temple.
With the pilgrimage to a temple comes another comparison, that of modesty. Like their Muslim counterparts, Mormons have rules of modesty that require covering parts of the body considered sacred and/or private. While most can immediately associate the head scarf \textit{(hijab)} with Muslim women, it is a lesser known point that Muslim men must also keep their chests, groins and legs to their knees covered. A similar modesty obligation falls upon Mormon men and women, especially after being permitted to enter a temple. Everything between the shoulders down to the knees should be covered at all times, except in special circumstances, such as swimming, sports, bathing, or intimate relations between husband and wife. Even in the case of swimming, it is still recommended that one-piece bathing suites be worn rather than bikinis.

The cultural implications identified with these scriptural teachings result in social similarities regarding interpersonal relationships. “Individual Muslims as well as individual Mormons may have differing positions on matters not revealed in scripture, but for both religions the tradition of remaining within the limits of revealed scripture and customary practice is strong.”\textsuperscript{45} The remaining two sections of this chapter focus more specifically on two areas of private life where Mormons and Muslims more closely mirror each other in social practice.

Traditional Family Values and Sexual Morality

While both Islam and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints preach religious tolerance, both religions maintain strict guidelines concerning personal conduct that influence the behavior of their followers. One clear commonality that occurs is the commitment to the preservation of the traditional family. Islam and Mormonism share a common view of the traditional family unit that emphasizes intergenerational familial commitment.46

“Islam was developed as a paternalistic society. Within the family, the parents’ word is final. Great respect for parents and elders is expected, and it is given... the family comes first.”47 The obedience to one’s parents is a primary expectation for children and the conduct of one family member impacts the reputation and image of others. For this reason, many members of both religions avoid the use of nursing homes, considering the care of older relatives a duty and a privilege that maintains the primacy of the traditional family.48

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46 David Haldane, LOS ANGELES Times, 1.


48 Debra Richardson, Bridges of Faith between Mormons and Muslims Chapter 7, 1.
“Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for their children,” states Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to serve and love one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives – mothers and fathers – will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.  

Muslim concepts are identical,

The family is the foundation of Islamic society. Peace and security offered by a stable family unit is greatly valued and seen as essential for the spiritual growth of its members.  

Shared family values also extend into agreement concerning gender roles. Women are expected to regard their husbands as the head of the household. The appropriate dress of women as modest is further emphasized as a reflection upon her religiosity and personal righteousness. Sexual relationships are specifically confined to the marriage agreement, with both adultery and fornication viewed as sins. Same-faith marriage is encouraged as a mechanism for maintaining the integrity of each community. When compared to other religious traditions such as Judaism, Protestantism, and


50 Ibid.
Catholicism, there is less likelihood of Mormons and Muslims engaging in interfaith marriage.\textsuperscript{51}

In recent years, this shared devotion to the maintenance of the traditional family has prompted significant international cooperation between Mormon and Muslim organizations. For example, U.N. policies that fail to advocate the protection of two parent households have generated similar criticisms from Mormon and Muslim leaders. In 1999, BYU’s World Family Policy Center hosted the Second World Congress of Families in an effort to advocate against the “anti-family initiatives sponsored by the UN.”\textsuperscript{52} The conference hosted talks by several noted Muslim scholars and advocates, including Egyptian Jehan Sadat, widow of former Egyptian premiere Anwar Sadat.\textsuperscript{53} The coalition of Muslim and Mormon speakers demonstrated a shared interest in the preservation of two parent homes, the defense of marriage, and the defense of parents’ rights in overseeing the education of their children.

The two religions also share an identical, nuanced response to the current political debate over legalized abortion. Many religious institutions,

\textsuperscript{51} Debra Richardson, \textit{Bridges of Faith between Mormons and Muslims}, Chapter 7, 1.

\textsuperscript{52} Naomi Koppel, “Groups Defend the Natural Family,” \textit{Associated Press}, Nov. 13, 1999

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
including the Catholic Church, forbid abortion in all cases, maintaining that God alone has the right to take a life. Secular and feminist arguments found within the opposite end of the spectrum maintain that access to legal abortion is an innate human right. The LDS Church generally advises against the use of abortions, particularly in cases where the unplanned pregnancy occurs as a result of voluntary sexual activity, and the church has established penalties for those who choose in such cases to abort. However, there are cases in which the LDS Church deems abortion as a viable option. These parameters, however, are narrow, and Mormons found guilty of participating in an abortion outside of such circumstances can possibly face excommunication from the Church.

Similarly, the Muslim rule regarding abortion maintains that abortion is impermissible except in very particular circumstances. The Mormon and Muslim response constitutes an approach premised upon a shared belief in three fundamental tenets: “a respect for God-created life, a prohibition against killing innocent life, and the necessity of taking responsibility for sexual activity.”\textsuperscript{54} Both religions maintain that the preservation of life is an important ethical goal, yet each recognizes instances where access to abortion may be ethically mandated. For example, in cases where the mother’s life is

\textsuperscript{54} Donna Lee Bowen, “Respect for Life,” 183.
endangered by the pregnancy, both religions allow for the use of abortion since both value the adult mother’s life over that of the unborn fetus. Both groups also advocate consultation with established medical authorities in order to determine the appropriate use of abortion to save the mother’s life. The Mormon religion’s focus upon individual agency as a primary value permits the use of abortion in cases of rape. While rape within Muslim culture is a more complicated subject because of the historical association of rape with adultery. An increasing number of Muslim scholars have advocated the use of abortion in cases of rape, particularly early within the pregnancy.\textsuperscript{55}

The advocacy and/or tolerance of polygamy is frequently mentioned as a parallel between the two faiths. However, it is important to recognize that the taking of more than one wife is practiced only by a small minority of Muslims and the practice has been banned within the LDS Church since 1890. If any member of the LDS Church is found to have sympathies with polygamists they face excommunication.\textsuperscript{56} The basis for this practice differs significantly within the two faiths.\textsuperscript{57} In addition, the topic of polygamy is often used as an instrument of Orientalist propaganda to emphasize the “savage nature” of the

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 194.


\textsuperscript{57} Hugh Nibley, \textit{Islam and Mormonism}, 55.
William Milligan Sloane praised the existence of the “monogamous family” as the “single greatest achievement of Western civilization” while polygamy was viewed as “an essential element of Oriental custom” which “induces a totally different style of relationship, intensifying kinship but minimizing personal responsibility.” Therefore, while polygamy may be tolerated by some Muslims, it is rejected by the LDS Church and is a basis for excommunication. Therefore, it is unlikely to constitute a significant bridge of commonality.

The ideologies of these two faiths exert a strong influence over the personal choices made by their respective members. “Neither of them is merely a creedal faith. Rather, they represent ways of life. To belong to either community requires an almost total commitment in customs, values and lifestyle.” This total commitment to their respective lifestyles helps to ensure the perpetuation of these unique communities. Members of both communities are likely to marry like-minded individuals to raise their children in the tradition of their families, reinforcing their spiritual and cultural beliefs through family generations.

**Health Code**


59 Ibid.

The precepts of Mormonism and Islam provide practical rules regarding physical fitness that emphasize a common respect for the human body. The human body is viewed as God’s creation and God’s temple; its respect is therefore required as part of religious observance. The religious guidelines regarding personal conduct extend into areas of nutrition. “Bridling one’s physical appetites does not only apply to passion, but to the other literal bodily hungers of eating and drinking as well. Islam also has a health code similar to the LDS Word of Wisdom.”\textsuperscript{61} The Word of Wisdom refers to the LDS commandment, which states that in order to be in good standing with The Church, members must abstain completely from alcohol, tobacco, coffee, tea and harmful drugs.\textsuperscript{62} In Islam, the emphasis is placed on abstinence from alcohol and pork products. Muslims and Mormons both abstain from drinking alcohol or partaking in other intoxicating substances.\textsuperscript{63} The use of illicit drugs is prohibited.\textsuperscript{64} While some points of the respective health codes differ, both religions caution against the ills associated with excess consumption. These

\textsuperscript{61} Debra Richardson, \textit{Bridges of Faith between Mormons and Muslims} Chapter 7, 1.

\textsuperscript{62} The \textit{Word of Wisdom} can be found in the book of LDS scripture called \textit{The Doctrine and Covenants} in section 89. It is a revelation given through Joseph Smith, at Kirtland, Ohio, February 27, 1833.

\textsuperscript{63} David Haldane, \textit{Los Angeles Times}, 1.

\textsuperscript{64} Spencer J. Palmer, “Comments on Common Ground,” 90.
practices help to reinforce the individual’s focus upon spiritual health while also engaging in the reinforcement of faith through practice.

Fasting, going without all food and drink for a specific period of time, is another shared tradition which has many points of commonality for the two faiths. For Mormons and Muslims alike, fasting is viewed as an opportunity to focus upon the contemplation of spiritual issues. Specific fasting rituals are observed on an annual basis. Mormons participate in regularized fasting on the first Sunday of every month. On this day, Mormons fast for a 24-hour period, usually starting Saturday after dinner and ending Sunday evening with dinner. According to the fourth pillar, Muslims are commanded to fast during the month of Ramadan. During this holy month, Muslims do not eat or drink from dawn to dusk.

**Conclusion**

The points brought up within this chapter help illustrate some of the important scriptural and practical similarities that provide a basis for inter-religious communications. By no means does this chapter intend to oversimplify the precepts of these two distinct religions, nor does this discussion intend to obfuscate the important differences that such religious comparisons will inevitably draw. Despite the identified similarities, important

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differences remain. For example, the cornerstone of Mormon doctrine is based on the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, while Muslims reject this idea as heretical based on scripture such as the passage in the Quran which states “Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, Nor is He begotten.”  

However, these doctrinal differences can be set aside to allow for an appreciation of commonalities. Several Mormon academics quoted within this chapter have written about their personal experiences of living in the Middle East, noting striking similarities in lifestyle and values. While early comparisons by critics of Muslim and Mormon practices were intended to be pejorative, today the recognition of the similarities of these two distinct groups has evolved into a more positive study of two religious minorities in America and their place in interfaith relations. The study of Mormons and Muslims may therefore, help to transcend cultural and religious differences, allowing for shared communication and learning.

The growing recognition of the shared historical and doctrinal views of the two groups has already fostered inter-religious scholarship. Brigham Young University is internationally respected as one of the world’s top programs for translating classic Islamic works from Arabic to English.  

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66 *Quran* 112:2-3 (Abdullah Yusif Ali translation).

strength of this program, and the availability of scholarships, has attracted Muslim students to the school from around the world. Muslim students attending the LDS owned university report overwhelming satisfaction at being in a Mormon community because of the shared values and lifestyle.\textsuperscript{68} The high reputation earned by this institution of higher learning provides one mechanism for increased inter-religious dialogue, a topic whose potential will continue to be explored throughout this project.

CHAPTER 2
THE HISTORY OF MORMON-MUSLIM INTERFAITH RELATIONS

Introduction

In the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Professor Arnold Green suggests that the Orientalist attacks against Mormonism inspired the first Mormon-Muslim interfaith relationships. The negative attacks by Obadiah Dogberry, Pastor E. D. Howe and others that equated Mormonism with Islam spurred academic and practical interest in the similarities between these two religions. Several books and articles were published in the late nineteenth century that explored the supposed similarities between the two faiths. In fact, these pejoratives created confusing conflations of beliefs among non-Mormon, non-Muslim academics. Publications by hostile authors such as Bruce Kinney and Joseph Willing further strengthened these misperceptions. Notable scholars investigated these asserted links. In 1860, Richard Francis Burton, an expert on Arabic studies and Islam, travelled to Utah to confirm the similarities between Muslims and Mormons.¹ His study helped to inspire additional researchers to visit Utah in the belief that they would learn about Islam by observing Mormons.²

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² *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism* lists David Margoliouth, Eduard Meyer, Hans Thimme
Some early Mormon documents echo the negative views of Muslims and worked to break the associated links between the two faiths. However, strong evidence from the nineteenth century suggests that prominent LDS leaders sought to defend Muslims and promote a more tolerant view of Islam.

...speeches by apostles George A. Smith and Parley P. Pratt in 1855 evoked more positive traditional interpretations: that Islam, fulfilling biblical promises made to Ishmael (Gen. 21), was divinely instigated to "scourge" apostate Christianity and to curb idolatry. Perhaps unknowingly paraphrasing Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792), George A. Smith applied historical judgment to Islam's experience: "As they abode in the teachings which Mahomet gave them,...they were united and prospered; but when they ceased to do this, they lost their power and influence."

These early, positive testaments to the value of learning about Islam and the life of Muhammad survive to the present day as the LDS Church continues to reach out to members of the Islamic faith to build interfaith ties. These efforts are documented in this section.


4 Ibid., 34-35.
History of Mormon-Muslim Interfaith Cooperation

Reflecting upon his twenty plus years working and living throughout the Middle East, Orin D. Parker\(^5\) highlighted the need for members of the LDS Church to actively seek to understand the culture and beliefs of Islam in order to foster stronger interfaith relationships stating, “I make an appeal to the Church and to its members: if we seek to know and to interact with Muslims, we must understand and appreciate their belief, their philosophy, and their culture. We must know them before we can successfully reach their hearts.”\(^6\)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a history of interfaith relations with many religions beyond Islam. For example, academic and religious conferences have supported stronger ties between the LDS Church and Judaism and the LDS Church and other denominations of Christianity.\(^7\) Several practical matters support the Church’s interest in stronger ties with Islam. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world.\(^8\) Islam has contributed significant historical accomplishments, including

\(^5\) Orin D. Parker was president of America-Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc. (AMIDEAST) for nearly 20 years and a devout Latter-day Saint.


advancements in mathematics and medicine. The stereotypes that continue to plague Muslims, particularly those living in the United States following the terrorist attacks of September 11th, also speak to the Church’s ongoing interest in the sharing of truthful information about religious practices and beliefs. As noted in the previous chapter, there are many doctrinal and community similarities found within the Church and Islam that may provide the basis for interactions.

Dr. Arnold Green, historian and professor at BYU, chronicles the initial conflict within the Mormon community concerning the status of Islam. He concludes that some Mormons acted to distance themselves from Mohammad, who at the time was thought to be the antichrist and the enemy of Christianity. These Mormons were not favorable in their writings and opinions of being equated with Muslims; though they later became more sympathetic to Islam based on the realization that Muslims, like the Mormons, were likely to be misunderstood. Additionally, Mormon leaders generally accepted Mohammad as a messenger “of his time” to preach against idolatry and to establish monotheism in Arabia. Dr. Green further observes that

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members in the modern day Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Muslims are increasing their interaction and are finding ways to work together for the common good.

There are many specific examples of Mormon leaders who preached interfaith tolerance and appreciation. While Mormons may not agree with every tenet of Islam, they do not exclude the possibility that God grants his wisdom to individuals from different religions. Elder Orson Whitney, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, echoed this sentiment when he stated that God “is using not only his covenant of people, but other peoples as well, to consummate a work, stupendous, magnificent, and altogether too arduous for this little handful of Saints to accomplish by and of themselves.”\(^{11}\) Elder B. H. Roberts offered his support for this view stating as follows:

While The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is established for the instruction of men; and it is one of God’s instrumentalities for making known the truth yet he is not limited to that institution for such purposes, neither in time nor place. God raises up wise men and prophets here and there among all the children of men, of their own tongue and nationality, speaking to them through means that they can comprehend. … All the great teachers are servants of God; among all nations and in all ages. They are inspired men, appointed to instruct God’s children according to the conditions in the midst of which he finds them.\(^{12}\)

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\(^{12}\) Ibid.
This insight exhibited by Church leaders acknowledges that God is not limited to revealing truths to only one leader or church at one time. God may choose to work with individuals of any religion.

The acknowledgement of the potential truth and wisdom of individuals from other faiths provides the basis for the Mormon Church’s support for interfaith relations. Bruce McConkie of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated, “Every truth found in every church in all the world we believe. But we also say this to all men—Come and take the added light and truth that God has restored in our day. The more truth we have, the greater is our joy here and now; the more truth we receive, the greater is our reward in eternity.”13 In 1991, President Howard Hunter specifically encouraged Mormons to reach out to others when he said, “As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we seek to bring truth together. We seek to enlarge the circle of love and understanding among all the peoples of the earth. Thus we strive to establish peace and happiness, not only within Christianity but among all mankind.”14

President of the LDS Church Gordon B. Hinckley encouraged

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13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
others to build bridges of understanding when he said, “Be respectful of the opinions and feelings of other people. Recognize their virtues; don’t look for their faults. Look for their strengths and their virtues, and you will find strength and virtues that will be helpful in your own life.”

These comments highlight an honest effort to extend one’s understanding and acceptance beyond Mormonism and to learn from others. We can also conclude that Interfaith dialogue should seek to avoid attempts to convert others but rather demonstrate respect for the views of others.

Globalization and the growth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have further supported Mormon religious leaders’ attempts to strengthen this message of tolerance toward Islam. ¹⁵ In October 1992, Elder Russell M. Nelson quoted a public statement issued by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

All people everywhere [should] re-commit themselves to the time-honored ideals of tolerance and mutual respect. We sincerely believe that as we acknowledge one another with consideration and compassion we will discover that we can all peacefully coexist despite our deepest differences. That pronouncement is a contemporary confirmation of the Prophet Joseph’s earlier entreaty for tolerance. ¹⁶


These comments all reflect a historically strong, positive attitude maintained by the Church toward other religions generally and Islam in particular. This section highlights contemporary examples of Mormon-Muslim cooperation.

**Worldwide Contact**

The LDS Church’s support of international missions has facilitated the development of Mormon-Muslim ties. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have traveled throughout the Middle East since World War I. However, it is important to note that currently the LDS Church maintains a strict policy of not baptizing or attempting to proselytize Muslims in the Middle East. Reasons for this are likely a combination of “sustaining the law of the land” as found in the 12th article of faith of the LDS Church\(^\text{17}\), and wanting to maintain a presence in the Middle East which would likely not be possible were the LDS Church to antagonize the people and governments in the region. For example, students who wish to study at BYU’s campus in Jerusalem, The Center for Near Eastern Studies may do so only after signing a pledge which promises to never proselytize while in the region.\(^\text{18}\) Today the only missionaries serving in the region are service missionaries. For example, in

\(^\text{17}\) See Appendix B, *Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 91-92.

Amman, Jordan the LDS cultural center is run by service missionaries. During their 3-year missionary service, their work is limited to hosting LDS students who come to study through BYU and charity projects. As previously mentioned the strict no-proselytizing rules were established to respect cultural norms and the local laws of the Arab World and have resulted in enabling the Church to develop favorable relationships with the local governments. One example of this was a story related to me regarding the government of Saudi Arabia, where Mormons were allowed to hold LDS church services partially based on a personal contact of a Saudi Prince. The Falconer of the prince was LDS and asked the prince permission for Mormons to hold religious meetings. The prince granted his permission after inquiring of the Church’s presence in other Arab countries and receiving favorable reports that Mormons are true to their word and do not try to secretly proselytize and can be trusted to follow-through with promises concerning respecting local laws and customs.\textsuperscript{19} Such stories demonstrate that Arab governments trust The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to respect Islam and to not attempt to convert Muslims within their countries, an act that would receive a strong hostile response.

\textsuperscript{19} Story told by Daniel C. Peterson, LDS professor of Brigham Young University, during an informal interview at Claremont University, October 28, 2008, Claremont, California.
Furthermore, official Church guidelines throughout the world discourage the active proselytizing of Muslims.\textsuperscript{20}

Several Mormon academics have written on their personal experiences of living in the Middle East and most draw out the similarities in values and lifestyles.\textsuperscript{21} Several of these sources were discussed in the previous chapter. In particular Dr. Debra Richardson’s book speaks about the comparisons of religious practices such as the 5 pillars of Islam and how Mormonism has similar practices in its Articles of Faith.\textsuperscript{22} Dr. Lloyd Millar does a similar comparison though it is more focused on theology with an emphasis on scripture.\textsuperscript{23} Such extensive studies would not be possible without the positive existing ties between the LDS Church and Muslim governments.

In the aftermath of the September 11\textsuperscript{th} terror attacks, the Church spoke out in favor of the Muslim faith.

\textsuperscript{20} While I was unable to find published guidelines regarding Muslims wanting to investigate and possibly join the Church, several church leaders both in and outside of the United States related stories of Muslims requesting to be taught by LDS missionaries and/or joining the church through baptism. In every case, Muslims were only able to be taught and/or baptized after it was assured that their family, country or community had no objection. In one case, the LDS leadership required that the man first get permission from his Imam to be taught by the missionaries.

\textsuperscript{21} Debra Richardson, \textit{Bridges of Faith between Mormons and Muslims} Chapter 4, 1.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., Chapter 5, 1.

On September 20, 2001, the First Presidency of the Church offered the following public statement.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has enjoyed a long and mutually respectful relationship with many of the leaders and followers of Islam. We recognize that those responsible for the reprehensible actions of September 11 in no way represent the views of millions of Muslims throughout the world. We are grieved to hear of instances where innocent members of this and other faiths have been singled out for acts of retribution. We condemn such acts as wrong and immoral. The Church urges its members and people everywhere to extend kindness and love to all sons and daughters of God.\textsuperscript{24}

Church leadership issued the statement in response to the strong backlash against all Muslims living within the United States. The act signified a brave stance amid rising anti-Islam sentiment and provided a strong foundation for the strengthening of ties between the two religions.

Harry Reid, (D-Nevada), Senate Majority Leader and faithful Latter-day Saint gave this speech on the Senate floor October 18, 2001.

I have been on the floor before, speaking about Islam and what a great religion it is. I have been to the new mosque with them in Las Vegas. They are wonderful people with great families. I have come to realize Islam is a good religion; it is a good way of life. Muslims maintain a good health code as their religion dictates, and they have great spiritual values as their religion dictates. It is too bad there are some people – evil people around the world – who would target the innocent in the name if Islam. I believe that the strength of Islam, and the faith and fortitude of more than one billion Muslims around the world, will overcome these evil people and their evil deeds.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} Debra Richardson, \textit{Bridges of Faith between Mormons and Muslims}, Chapter 8, 1.

\textsuperscript{25} Congress, Senate, Senator Reid of Nevada, speaking on Islamic relations in America,
Education and Interfaith Relations

Educational institutions play an important role in providing the backdrop for interfaith interactions. In particular, Brigham Young University has played a major role in promoting strong relationships between the Church and Islam. This section will focus upon three examples. First, BYU welcomes students from the Islamic world to study at the school, providing them with a comfortable and tolerant learning environment. Second, BYU sponsors a world-renowned translation series that promotes the study of Arabic texts in the English language. Third, BYU invites Islamic scholars to share their views with students and alumni.

Brigham Young University fosters a strong, supportive atmosphere for Muslim students. The school has developed exchange programs and other academic agreements with educational institutions based in the Middle East. For example, through the establishment of BYU’s Jerusalem campus, a scholarship for Palestinians to study in the United States was created.

Class offerings provide students with information about both religions. All students, regardless of religious background, are required to take a minimum of two Book of Mormon classes as a core requirement for graduation. The department of Islamic studies provides courses related to Islam, including

a class devoted to the comparative study of Islam and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Campus organizations devoted to different faiths have the freedom to organize like-minded individuals and to invite participation from members of the greater community. BYU houses a Muslim Student Association and encourages students to explore the beliefs of this religion.

Muslim students at BYU report overwhelming satisfaction at being in a Mormon community because of the shared values and lifestyle. For example, Muslim students are often impressed by the school’s requirement for all students to sign an honor code including an ecclesiastical endorsement upon admittance. This honor code is a contractual agreement in which the student promises to abstain from alcohol, sexual misconduct and other proscribed practices. The honor code includes a requirement for all students to attend weekly religious meetings of their respective religions at least 75% of the time; failure to do so will result in the student’s dismissal. Muslim parents see such requirements and feel more comfortable sending their children abroad to study at a university that shares many of their same values.

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27 See Appendix C: Ecclesiastical Endorsement and Honor Code, 93-99.
In a documentary by Burk Olsen, then student of BYU, the lives of three BYU Muslim students are chronicled. The film seeks to document the experience and opinions of what it’s like to be a Muslim at a Mormon University. Common feedback was how the stereotype seen on TV about America couldn’t have been more different. They all noted how their opinions and viewpoints drastically changed for the better after studying at BYU.28

BYU’s Islamic translation series is one example of a long-term academic project designed to promote shared learning. The school translates significant Muslim works into English in order to make them more accessible to non-Arabic speakers through the Center for Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts.29 The project has drawn worldwide attention, attracting Muslim scholars to visit the campus. One Muslim ambassador stated that the translation series “will play a positive role in the West’s quest for a better understanding of Islam.”30 Dr. Daniel C. Peterson related a story about presenting the President of Indonesia, Abdulrahman Wahid a translated copy of the *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. "He was deeply moved that the Mormons, of all people, were

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making that book more widely available, and he offered to be of assistance to
us in our work in his country.”

Brigham Young University has also been active in inviting Muslim
leaders to visit the campus and lecture about the Muslim faith. These visits are
strongly associated with improvements in interfaith relations, as Muslim visitors
have exhibited strong appreciation for the opportunity to visit and learn with
BYU students and faculty. Maxwell Institute Executive Director Andrew C.
Skinner gave the following explanation after a visit by Omani delegates to the
campus:

The reactions of admiration and gratitude for the respect shown
their culture are consistent, he said, and visits from Arabic
dignitaries like the Omanis help the BYU scholars to better
understand the value of their academic work. “It certainly builds
greater bridges of understanding between two cultures that are
not all that dissimilar,” he remarked after the meeting.

The recent initiation of the Islamic Translation Series, cosponsored by
BYU and the Church, has resulted in several significant exchanges between
Muslim officials and leaders of the Church.

Ambassador Hussein Hassouna of the League of Arab States gave a lecture in


2005 as part of the ongoing Utah Statehood Centennial Year Celebration, an effort sponsored by BYU and Utah’s state governor’s office.\textsuperscript{33}

**Community and Individual Interfaith Events**

Southern California is the home of significant populations of both Mormons and Muslims and the state has been the host of many significant interfaith events. The observance of Ramadan and the breaking of the fast have provided an ideal opportunity for inter-religious dialogue. In 2008, a Mormon-Muslim event brought together over 70 guests to an interfaith dinner hosted at the Islamic Center in Irvine, California. The evening was coordinated by Thom Thorkelson, the director of interfaith relations at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Shaikh Saadullah Khan, a program coordinator at the Islamic center. The intent of the dinner was to allow Mormons and Muslims to learn more about Ramadan, Islam, and Mormonism. The event was held on the first Sunday of Ramadan so that the both groups could break their fast together. As a gesture of good faith, Thorkelson used the opportunity to present Khan with “the results of a nine-year project of translating important Islamic texts from Arabic to English.”\textsuperscript{34} Guests responded very favorably to the


\textsuperscript{34} Roqaya Eshmawi, “Mormons fast with Muslims on first Sunday of September,” *InFocus Southern California*, 2008, 1.
event and the organizations expect to host similar events in the future. As one guest stated, "I just thought it was a wonderful opportunity to get to know our Muslim neighbors and friends and to learn more about them and their practices of worship. It’s also very interesting how many areas of common belief that we have; there’s a lot of parallels in both of our faith traditions to give us common ground to stand on together."\textsuperscript{35} The opportunity allowed the groups to dispel common misconceptions about both religions and to learn about common interests and principles.

Humanitarian efforts provide an additional mechanism for successful interfaith activities. Both religions have strong histories of providing charitable support for those in need. In 2006, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints worked with the Islamic Relief Fund to provide medical support to the victims of a major earthquake in Indonesia.\textsuperscript{36} The Church and the Islamic Relief Fund also worked together to provide support to the survivors of the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{37} These cooperative efforts provided aid to

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.


families in Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Indonesia. The Church also provided significant humanitarian aid including “medical supplies, powdered milk, baby formula, hand soap and hygiene kits”\(^{38}\) to civilians displaced due to the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel in Lebanon. The Church and the Islamic Relief Fund worked together to provide aid to Palestinians in 2006, as well. “This marks the first occasion in which Islamic Relief Worldwide and the Mormon Church, in collaboration with the United Palestinian Appeal, provide joint assistance to Palestine refugees in Lebanon.”\(^{39}\) In these cases, the Church has remained committed to the provision of charity to those in need regardless of their religious affiliation.

Past acts by individuals have also fostered interfaith dialogue and understanding. One notable example is Rob Davis, the police chief of San Jose, California. The local community had struggled with ethnic and cultural divisions and the police chief took it upon himself to reach out to isolated communities. He selected Muslims in particular because of his concern that


the Islamic community has faced prejudice throughout the United States since the September 11th terrorist attacks. Davis pledged to observe the Ramadan fast with his Muslim constituents. During the holy month, he did not eat from dawn, starting at about 5:30 am Pacific Standard Time (PST) and lasting to after sunset, roughly 7:30 (PST) in the evening. To supplement his fast and gain a better understanding of Islam, Davis studied the Quran and visited local Muslim families to observe *iftar*, the end of day breaking of the fast.

Davis’ example demonstrates that even small acts by individuals can generate significant support and interest in interfaith dialogue. In addition to receiving accolades from members of the local community, Davis received support and praise from interested persons around the world.

Letters have been flowing in from around the world. This week’s mail included missives from a university professor and his students in the United Arab Emirates. The professor wrote that he had heard and read only anti-Muslim sentiments from the United States, but that Davis’ action had given him faith that there could be improved understanding between the West and the Middle East.40

Davis’ action was particularly impressive because of his commitment.

While it is not uncommon for non-Muslims to attempt a fast for one day,

Davis continued his observance for the full month. Davis’ willingness to

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learn about other religions reflects a greater attitude supported within
the Mormon community. When Mormon youths serve as missionaries,
they gain an important opportunity to observe different cultures and
faiths. Davis himself served as a missionary in Argentina.

In some cases, interfaith attempts have not achieved success. Potential
organizational challenges may prevent an attempt from being successful. One
pitfall to interfaith dialogue is the perception of proselytizing. At times, good
faith organizers seeking to arrange inter-religious meetings have used such
opportunities to attempt to convert members to their chosen religion. Even the
perception of proselytizing can turn off potential respondents. Mormons, who
have a deep tradition of missionary work may find it difficult to transition from a
focus on conversion to the interfaith focus of learning about another religion. At
one interfaith event Muslims were suspicious when full-time missionaries were
in attendance and several Muslims left offended. One Islamic organization
was criticized when its invitation to an interfaith conference included the
following line: “We hope to present a clear view of Islam to you and also of the
Islamic view of Christianity; these dialogues, hopefully, will lead us all to the
same right path that has been revealed to us through His Chosen Prophet.”

This example highlights the need for organizers to be wary of such activities

41 Larry Poston and Carl Ellis, The Changing Face of Islam in America: Understanding and
Reaching your Muslim Neighbor (Camp Hill, PA: Horizon Books, 2000), 59.
which send the wrong message. There is a time and place for proselytizing, however interfaith events should avoid attempts to convert and focus on promoting respectful tolerance as an integral component. The World Council of Churches, a worldwide coalition of different Christian churches and denominations, provides helpful guidelines on how to facilitate interfaith exchanges. The following 13 recommendations outline appropriate conduct for the organization of a successful dialogue:

1. Churches should seek ways in which Christian communities can enter into dialogue with their neighbours [sic] of different faiths and ideologies.

2. Dialogues should normally be planned together.

3. Partners in dialogue should take stock of the religious, cultural and ideological diversity of their local situation.

4. Partners in dialogue should be free to "define themselves."

5. Dialogue should generate educational efforts in the community.

6. Dialogue is most vital when its participants actually share their lives together.

7. Dialogue should be pursued by sharing in common enterprises in community.

8. Partners in dialogue should be aware of their ideological commitments.

9. Partners in dialogue should be aware of cultural loyalties.

10. Dialogue will raise the question of sharing in celebrations, rituals, worship and meditation.
11. Dialogue should be planned and undertaken ecumenically, wherever possible.

12. Planning for dialogue will necessitate regional and local guidelines.

13. Dialogue can be helped by selective participation in world inter-religious meetings and organizations.  

These guidelines provided valuable insight into the organization of the inter-religious exchange that is the focus of this project. This five-year case study focused on the goals as outlined by the World Council of Churches for inter-religious dialogue, mainly, the potential for individuals from different religious traditions and doctrine to build relationships at the grassroots level.

Conclusion

This section provided an overview of the current state of Mormon-Muslim interfaith interactions. In the early years of the LDS Church, Mormon leaders struggled with the negative associations with Islam and some Mormon leaders supported criticism of Islam. However, the Church has promoted a strong message of tolerance as typified by the leadership’s commitment to honoring the spiritual contributions of Muhammad. The Church’s goal of tolerance has enabled new partnerships and initiatives aimed at improving interfaith relations.

These initiatives have been undertaken by the Church’s leadership, by BYU and by individual Mormons.

Through public appearances, academic forums and humanitarian aid, much as been documented in terms of goodwill and solid relationships between the Mormon and Muslim leaders. Individual, community and school-based programs have all generated strong, positive responses from participants. While some grassroots efforts have been done, there is not currently a real movement for Mormons and Muslims to actively work together. Both religions can benefit from fostering good relationships of mutual respect that go beyond just tolerance into community building. While the previous activities have been successful, they illustrate the need to develop future interfaith activities between Muslims and Mormons. In order to understand why and how such activities are organized successfully, this project provides a comprehensive case study of a five year initiative focused upon interfaith relations. This project will contribute to the current body of literature by evaluating the influence of such long-term initiatives.
CHAPTER 3
Case Studies: METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Introduction
This chapter outlines the selected case study research design and methodology. This project presents a descriptive-exploratory multiple case study using qualitative analyses. The method supports the socio-historical interests of the subject matter. Data collection, study population, significance and limitations are all identified.

Case Study Design Overview
Case studies are very popular in sociology, history and education because they allow researchers a flexible format for the evaluation of complicated social questions. Yin (2002) explains that the purpose of the case study is to permit investigators to “retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events – such as individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, international relations, and the maturation of industries.”¹ Case studies are a qualitative research design that facilitate the use of different data collection and analysis strategies.²

studies may collect quantitative or qualitative data (or both) depending upon
the parameters of the subject.

There are three types of case studies: the exploratory case, the
descriptive case and the explanatory case. In *Applications of Case
Study Research*, Yin identifies and defines these three options.

An exploratory case study (whether based on single or multiple
cases is aimed at defining the questions and hypotheses of a
subsequent study (not necessarily a case study) or at
determining the feasibility of the desired research procedures. A
descriptive case study presents a complete description of a
phenomenon within its context. An explanatory case study
presents data bearing on cause-effect relationships – explaining
how events happened.\(^3\)

Exploratory cases tend to focus upon the discussion and exploration of social
issues in order to develop and recommend future action or future research
opportunities. Explanatory cases tend to focus upon ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions,
such as why a particular phenomenon occurs or why people respond the way
they do to a particular stimulus. The descriptive case study illustrates and
explains an identified case in order to provide generalizations about a greater
number of subject areas. This project is an exploratory-descriptive case study
focused upon the organization and impact of Muslim-Mormon interfaith events
using qualitative evaluation.

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2002), 5.
Case studies can also be defined according to the quantity of cases evaluated. “A single-case study focuses on a single case only; multiple case studies, however, include two or more cases within the same study.”\(^4\) In the case of multiple case studies, each of the cases is selected based upon a shared focus upon the identified subject or phenomenon. “These multiple cases should be selected so that they replicate each other – either predicated similar results (literal replication) or contrasting results for predictable reasons (theoretical replication).”\(^5\) For this project, multiple cases are preferred for analysis because they allow the researcher to consider the influence of multiple events upon the local population over the identified period of time. Interfaith events do not occur in a vacuum and one successful event is likely to spur future activities. This project collects data from a series of Mormon-Muslim interfaith events organized over a five year period in the Washington DC metropolitan area, and expanding to several other states during the fifth and final year.

**Event Organization**

From 2002-2007, groups of Mormons and Muslims were brought together with the purpose of learning about their respective faiths. The organization of these events was influenced by the recommendations of the World Council of

\(^4\) Ibid.

\(^5\) Ibid.
Churches. These events were organized by the organization *Muslims and Latter-day Saints United for Values (MLUV)*, a group that includes both Muslim and Mormon leaders, and the Muslim Student Association (MSA) of Georgetown University. The shared responsibility of the organization of the event allowed members of both religious communities to provide leadership within the proceedings. Initially, the intent of the organizers was to hold a single interfaith dinner during the month of Ramadan to promote inter-religious dialogue and friendship. However, the popularity of the event generated the support for additional events. These subsequent events were organized after the members of the MLUV recognized the cultural and ideological diversity within the local area, noting the high concentration of Mormons and Muslims.

The main events were organized during the holy month of Ramadan, during the first Sunday of the month when both Mormons and Muslims were fasting within their own religious traditions (Mormons for the previous 24 hours and Muslims from sunrise of that day). The evenings culminated in ending their fasts together with dinner that incorporated religious observances. Group and individual prayers were observed with explanations and translations from Arabic to English when needed. Mormon and Muslim guest speakers provided information about their respective religions and ended with a Question and Answer session. Educational pamphlets, Qurans, and Book of Mormons were...
distributed to complement the message from the keynote speakers.

**Population**

The first dinner was intended for student attendance. However, the popularity of the interfaith exchange supported the expansion of the events to a larger population of invitees. Though the events were initiated by and for Georgetown students, the events reached far beyond the walls of academia with nearly 80% of attendees being non-student residents of the Washington DC metropolitan area. Most had careers related to the government in some regard, many directly related to Arab and Islamic relations, such as the U.S. Congress, Foreign Service and other branches of government dealing with post 9/11 issues.

**Data Collection**

The participants were asked to report their opinions of the events. The questions were intentionally open-ended in order to allow the participant a free reign of qualitative expression concerning the purpose, content and impact of the event. The distributed questions are listed in the Appendix.\(^6\)

The questionnaire was an original creation by the researcher. In order to improve validity and accuracy of the instrument, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to members of three Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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\(^6\) See Appendix D, *Qualitative Feedback Questionnaire*, 100-101.
wards (congregations) as a pilot test. This pilot testing helped the researcher to identify misleading or unclear questions. The pilot testing also allowed the researcher to reword questions that might otherwise be read as leading the respondent toward a particular answer. The feedback from the participants also helped point to additional questions to be included in the questionnaire. The completed and corrected questionnaire was then later distributed to the event participants.

**Hypothesis**

This study expected to validate or deny the following hypotheses:

1. Both Mormons and Muslims feel the need to dispel misconceptions about their faith.
2. Both share similar moral beliefs, which set them apart socially from mainstream America.
3. While much of the respective doctrines of the two religions are not shared, the identified similarities in doctrine are sufficient and useful for building common bonds through interfaith activities.
4. Scheduling may improve the success of such events; The shared day of fasting for example will promote a bond of understanding and a greater desire to learn about the other faith.

**Significance**

This project is worthy of interest for several reasons. Both Islam and Mormonism are proselytizing faiths and tend to have larger families than the
average American. This means that both faiths are rapidly expanding and therefore are finding interaction more frequent.”

Second, this project highlights the discrimination faced by the members of these two religions and also provides information to combat common misperceptions and prejudices. In a 2007 a Gallup Poll\(^7\) asking the American people who they would most likely vote into office, both Mormons and Muslims only received 2% of American confidence. While the terror attacks of 9/11 might explain why the American people are still suspicious of a religion that is claimed to be practiced by those who take responsibility for the attacks, Mormonism conjured up equal suspicion though it wasn’t until a follow-up poll revealed that Americans didn't accept Mormons based on the mistaken notion that members of the Church practice polygamy. Furthermore, the poll revealed a general opinion that Mormons hold "weird beliefs" and are "cult like." However, it is interesting to note that as of 2007 there were 16 Mormons serving as Congressmen including the Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV). One might conclude that while Mormons continue to conjure up feelings of prejudice and bigotry, those who follow the religion are well integrated into


American society. Therefore, the environment should be ready for increased initiatives aimed at improving interfaith understanding.

Third, this project may illuminate the current status of Mormon-Muslim interfaith activities, providing a platform for the development of future projects. Feedback from both Mormon and Muslim leadership has been positive; however, in order to extend the positive effects of such interaction, more initiative from both sides is needed in order to galvanize community cooperation.

The local wards of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints located in the Washington D.C. area had not previously been active in the organization of grassroots interfaith events with Muslims. This project drew the attention of local leaders. Organization between MLUV, the MSA and local church leaders may improve future attendance and expand the scope of interfaith projects.

Fourth, this project may provide more general insight into the advantages and challenges associated with interfaith events. Religious leaders may apply similar strategies to promote interfaith exchanges involving the members of different religious groups.
Limitations

The events documented were organized at Georgetown University and the majority of attendees were residents of the Washington DC metropolitan area. Both men and women were invited to attend in order to prevent gender from influencing the results. Views collected through this case study may be influenced by geographic factors that may not be readily reproducible elsewhere. In addition, socioeconomic factors may play a role in influencing individual views on tolerance. However, this case study did not collect socioeconomic data about the participants and such an analysis would likely fall outside of the scope of this project. Furthermore, the population participating may represent a subset of the community that is pre-disposed to religious tolerance and participation in interfaith initiatives. It is possible that the views expressed by the participants may not be reflective of the larger Mormon and Muslim communities. Individuals who are inclined to attend such an event may be predisposed to responding favorably.

Researcher bias and the role of the researcher were also evaluated during the course of this project. The researcher plays an important role within qualitative research as she must collect and interpret the data offered by the respondents. As a leader of MLUV and organizer of the events, one concern would be the influence that the researcher might have upon the responses offered by the participants. The researcher knew many of the participants who...
offered feedback. It is possible that some of the respondents might feel pressured to offer a positive appraisal of the organization.

The researcher took some precautions to help limit this risk. First, participants were invited to offer anonymous feedback. While many chose to identify themselves by name, this was not a requirement for participation. Respondents were free to return the questionnaire through a medium that would preserve their confidentiality and anonymity. For example, respondents could send the feedback through email (as many did) to a third party who would remove the sender’s email address before forwarding to the researcher. Due to this method of delivery, respondents did not feel pressure to provide positive, face-to-face feedback. Respondents could also offer feedback through another MLUV organizer, who would then return the questionnaire to the researcher. An additional purpose of the questionnaire was to make suggestions on how to improve the organization of the event. This actively solicited potentially negative feedback, helping to alleviate any pressure to offer only positive feedback.

Some characteristics of the feedback received suggest that the influence of the researcher did not impact the comments offered. The fact that some negative feedback was collected suggests that the respondents felt comfortable offering their opinions. Furthermore, the continued event
participation indicates that the positive feedback offered by the majority of the respondents was sincere. The strong positive feedback that will be discussed in the next chapter is supported by the continued popularity and growth of this event. The respondents alone would not be a significant enough number of invitees to justify the size and scope of subsequent dinner events.
CHAPTER 4
CASE STUDY DISCUSSION

Introduction

This section discusses the feedback collected from the event participants. The collected feedback was organized according to four re-occurring themes: social benefits, the development of political ties and the organization of charitable efforts. Negative feedback is also discussed.

Social Benefits

Several social benefits were recognized by the participants. First, participants viewed the events as an opportunity to meet new people and develop meaningful friendships. Comments focused upon an interest in attending future events and a growing awareness of the strong similarities found between the beliefs of the members of the two communities. The following comments from separate individuals support this theme.

It really touched me when the young man (I forget his name but he did the Q&A) shared that once we all set aside our doctrinal differences we share the same pursuit of truth, honesty, integrity and justice. It could not have been more appropriately stated. Thank you again, I look forward to participating in the future.

The dinner on Sunday was not only fascinating and interesting but completely uplifting as well. I loved learning more about the Muslim religion as well as getting a chance to share the gospel as well. It was touching to find such amazing people that I shared values with and I made friends that I hopefully will be able to see again.
Salaams! People still continue to tell me how good the event was. Even the Imam called me the next day to congratulate us. He specifically asked that I extend his gratitude to you for your warm portrayal of our community. He also expressed his desire to keep this relationship alive!

Everyone was very friendly and I felt comfortable and learned a lot about Islam. The people at our table (3 Mormons and 2 Muslims) exchanged phone numbers and email addresses and we all got together again for dinner on Sep. 30! I think some long-term friendships have been developed.

I felt again, as I had last year, that it was one of the most worthwhile things I have done with an evening in a long time! As you, I really feel the importance of gathering together to celebrate our similarities and our unity in the Lord. It is so apparent (sic) that the Spirit is among us when we are focusing on common good, rather than emphasizing what pulls us apart.¹

The development of new friendships through the event is particularly significant due to the social preferences of the two faiths. During the pilot, the questionnaires demonstrated that an overwhelming percentage (90%) of the respondents had fewer than two friends from a different faith (non-Mormon). This finding is consistent with the observations discussed in the first chapter. Mormons tend to interact with members of their own religion socially. While the pilot test did not invite initial comment from Muslim individuals, it is expected that a similarly high percentage of Muslims would have mostly same-faith friends. So, for

¹ Quotes from anonymous e-mails submitted by participants through feedback questionnaire.
members of both groups, the event offered an important opportunity to form lasting relationships with individuals outside of their respective communities. Without the organized event, it is highly unlikely that such friendships would have been formed. Furthermore, as the following additional social benefits will demonstrate, these new relationships are formed on shared values and interests.

Second, participants saw the events as a way to dispel prominent stereotypes and prejudices plaguing the members of both communities. Some sample comments supporting this point of view are as follows:

I guess my point in all this is we share different beliefs but similar spiritual goals with our Muslim friends. One goal we do have is to educate each other about ourselves, as they so eloquently did last night. We then can both stand and defend the character of each other and their religion against those who misunderstand it.

I understand Islam so much more than I did before, and have so much respect for those devoted to its teachings. The speakers helped to clarify the misconceptions of Islam, and I especially appreciated the comments about women covering themselves to show respect for their bodies and to take control of how men perceive them- I feel like that stance is common ground between both the Islamic and LDS beliefs and I'm glad I now understand this commonality.

It was also cool to learn of the importance they place on the family and their "dating" practices. Food for thought that's for sure. There are even more similiarities [sic] than I previously thought between the two religions.²

² Ibid.
The lasting relationships noted in the first social benefit are formed due to the identified similarities. Certainly, this project does not seek to minimize the important differences in beliefs that do exist. However, the recognition of similarities lays the groundwork for lasting social partnerships likely to be advantageous to members of both communities. Both Muslim and Mormon individuals will enjoy the benefits of friendship without having to deal with some of the issues that distinguish these groups from other religious beliefs. These comments are consistent with previous studies that demonstrate that Mormons increasingly feel uncomfortable within the greater Christian community because of the stark difference in morals and values. As Noel B. Reynolds explained, “Mormons are increasingly uncomfortable in a greater Christian society which has rapidly moved to an extremely liberal approach. I was impressed to see that it is the Muslim countries of the world that have most successfully resisted this alarming trend.”  

The new friendships being fostered allow members of both communities to feel comfortable because they do not have to face the stereotypes or prejudices found within other groups.

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Third, participants saw the events as an opportunity for new learning.

The participants commented upon the educational quality of the events as follows:

I have taken a World Religions class and a Multiculturalism class, but it is not the same as talking to someone of another faith. I was pleasantly surprised at how many similarities there are between Muslims and Mormons.

It was really great to learn about another religion's beliefs and practices. I really enjoyed talking with the Muslim girls at our table, and they had lots of questions for us. This is absolutely one of the coolest things that we have gotten to do in DC, and it was a great learning experience.

What an incredible experience! I enjoyed it more than I can say. And I learned so much about Muslims and Islam. I always respected this culture and religion, but I do so much more now. I feel like I have a real connection with anyone that believes in this phenomenal religion. I have a great deal of respect for the beliefs and teachings of Islam and those that follow it. Having the opportunity to sit down and discuss so frankly and openly what others believe in was a unique, unmatched opportunity. I wish that more people could have participated. I wish that I could have had more time to sit and discuss more in depth the beliefs we had a taste of Sunday night.

Education is one of the primary purposes of interfaith dialogues. Scholars frequently point to the ignorance of the Muslim religion prevalent in the United States. For example, David M. Kennedy, the former U.S. Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the former special representative of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, explained, “I’ve been impressed over the years with the lack of
understanding in our country – the United States of America, of the Islamic world. It is time indeed for gatherings such as these here.\textsuperscript{4} This ignorance is particularly damaging with the contemporary context. Modern society and the development of new information technologies guarantees that individuals from different faiths, cultures, races and creeds will interact in ways never imagined just a century ago. Americans cannot afford to remain ignorant of the cultures and religions so prevalent outside of the United States. Based upon the feedback offered by the participants, the event helped to educate all present, providing important insight into the beliefs and goals of both religions.

**The Development of Political Ties**

The participants recognized political advantages of the development of interfaith ties that expand beyond education and prejudice. These comments focused upon the building of local coalitions organized around shared social issues, including traditional family values and a pro-life stance. The development of a post September 11\textsuperscript{th} dialogue about terrorism was another noted benefit. Muslim participants recognized the political benefits associated with political ties that might connect the two communities. The U.S. Mormon population, while relatively small (5 million), is among the most powerful and connected groups in America. Mormon adherents represent 16 members of

Congress and many other key business and government powerbrokers. Participants from both religions expressed an interest in continued interactions with MLUV and with any future events.

**The Organization of Economic/Charitable Efforts**

Members of both communities are often active in charitable efforts. The recognition of shared values supported the discussion of shared activities. The participants made plans to work together in order to achieve common goals related to the promotion of particular charities consistent with the faiths of both religions. This finding is consistent with previous charitable projects joining members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and members of Islam. For example, members of both groups have worked together to feed the hungry. The provision of disaster relief has also been a shared action, as the Church’s humanitarian branch funds the Islamic Relief organization. When giving feedback, several members requested information about future activities that might further strengthen the bonds developed.

**Evaluation of Hypotheses**

The feedback related to prejudice and education affirms the first hypothesis as true. Hypothesis #1 stated: “Both Mormons and Muslims feel the need to dispel misconceptions about their faith.” The comments about prejudice, misperceptions and stereotypes demonstrate that the participants
were concerned about misconceptions. Additional comments emphasized this point, as several Mormon participants expressed a desire to see more Mormon speakers available to discuss specific religious doctrines. This was later addressed by having events outside of Ramadan.

The feedback related to friendships and similar social beliefs affirm the second hypothesis. Hypothesis #2 stated: “Both share similar moral beliefs, which set them apart socially from mainstream America.” Examples of these shared moral beliefs include absolute abstinence from alcohol, strict rules of sexual conduct between men and women outside of marriage, the concept of male patriarchy within the family, and other strong traditional family values.

The feedback also affirms hypothesis #3, which stated “While much of the respective doctrines of the two religions are not shared, the identified similarities in doctrine are sufficient and useful for building common bonds through interfaith activities.” Participants acknowledged that important differences continue to exist but did not allow the recognition of these differences to overshadow their common ground.

The feedback neither strictly confirmed nor denied the final hypothesis. Hypothesis #4 stated: “Scheduling may improve the success of such events.” The case interfaith events were held during a time when both groups observed their day of fasting. The shared act of fasting was expected to further promote
not only the bond of understanding but also a willingness to know more about each other. The dinner schedule did appear to provide an excellent opportunity for interactions. However, the additional interest in more activities, such as charitable and political cooperation as well as private, social gatherings, suggests that the Ramadan scheduling is not necessary for the success of Mormon-Muslim interfaith events.

**Constructive Feedback**

As part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to offer feedback related to the improvement of the activity. The one suggestion that consistently arose was the development of additional educational materials. Materials such as a clear agenda that is made available to all participants and Q & A (Question and Answer) documents seemed essential to the event. Additional materials were requested. Financial constraints may limit the ability of the organization to provide additional materials to participants, however. ⁵ Nevertheless, such feedback acknowledges the intent of the participants to utilize and build upon the knowledge gained within the event.

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⁵ At most events media and literature tables were on display. Many participants requested literature, CDs, DVDs to take home which were not available to gift at the time. In the future, media and literature should be provided for participants.
Negative Feedback

Some negative feedback was collected from participating members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This complaint revolved around a negative response to the idea of not proselytizing. Missionary work and the discussion of doctrine is a significant part of the Mormon culture. Participation for these members was made difficult because they felt that they were constrained from the open discussions that they would normally attempt to initiate. This feedback did not include any objections to future interfaith events. In many cases, participants who offered this complaint chose to attend future events, indicating a willingness to engage in this exchange despite the communication limitation.

While there was no negative feedback from Muslim participants, several Muslim participants voiced concern to the Muslim organizers that the participation of full-time missionaries of the LDS Church was inappropriate and would likely make their participation in future events unlikely.
Conclusion

As this study amply demonstrates, Mormons and Muslims share a set of commonalities that affect or define their outlook, worldview and lifestyle; these commonalities form the potential for a profoundly cooperative interfaith relationship. Such a relationship may have far-reaching benefits with regard to the possibility of collaboration on social justice and social service initiatives. Furthermore, a cooperative interfaith partnership may potentially aid both groups in gaining understanding and building solidarity within the larger community. The relatively marginalized position of both groups within American society creates an opening and a need for building bridges, and the inherent similarities between these religious groups form an excellent foundation for this. As outlined above, Mormons and Muslims share several elements of faith and culture. The Abrahamic roots of both religions, however, are perhaps less significant than the shared aspects of culture which include and emphasize the family and traditional, spiritual values. Of course, another commonality is the relatively marginalized position within the context of the dominant American culture and western liberalism in general.

Ideologically, western liberalism is rooted in humanism and the pursuit of progress through empirical knowledge. In practice, it would be very difficult
to deny that secularism and materialism largely define or characterize Western culture and its dominant ideology. To the degree that this is true, both Islam and Mormonism are profoundly counter-cultural in the American context. This perhaps explains the high degree of discrimination that both face within this fundamentally secular society. By refusing to adhere to the precepts of materialism, and by prescribing modes of dress and lifestyle that are counter to the prevailing manifestations of consumerism which keep the American economy going, these two faiths are more profoundly and adamantly out of step with current culture than most others. Certainly Mormons and Muslims are not the first to experience prejudice for being outside of the Protestant majority. The Nativist movement of the mid-nineteenth century for example guarded against the entry of ‘foreigners’ into the United States. They were particularly emphatic in their condemnation of Catholic immigrants, the principle argument being that an individual who is loyal to the Pope in Rome cannot also be loyal to America, and cannot, in fact, be a ‘real’ American. As one Nativist publication, The Anti-Catholic Press, argued, “... every Catholic stands committed as an enemy to the Republic [because]... the Roman Catholics are bound to serve their Church before their country” ⁶. The Nativist

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movement was strongly influential for less than a decade, however the principles which underlie it are, arguably, alive and well in some of the discrimination that one encounters against members of non-mainstream religious groups. It is perhaps also worth noting that the election of John F. Kennedy as President was controversial in its day precisely because he was a Catholic; during the electoral campaign, Protestant leaders “... frequently emphasized that the Pope had never renounced his authority over civil rulers”\(^7\), implying that Kennedy, if elected, would answer to a higher authority than that of the state. Mitt Romney was put under similar scrutiny regarding his allegiance to the Mormon Church. America views itself as a religious country, but not, seemingly, in cases where religion threatens to take precedence over secular and nationalistic values. Above all, there does appear to be a tacit belief in the adherence to secular culture above all else. Perhaps the reason why Mormons and Muslims are so reviled and distrusted is precisely because they are seen to put religion before patriotism of country. Because of this, and because the values they engender are not, then, transparent to all and shared by all, they become the object of suspicion. The irony of this hardly need be pointed out, given that the very origins of the American nation were associated with religious tolerance; America was originally populated by religious

dissidents seeking refuge.

Indeed, these early origins of America seem very much in line with the objectives of those seeking the freedom to participate in the LDS belief system and lifestyle free of discrimination and persecution. In the PBS production The Mormons, which examines the origins and perceptions of Latter-day Saints, a member of the Church characterizes his desired interaction with society as follows: "We want society to respect our desire to live beyond/ to live deeper." This seems a simple enough desire, but it profoundly challenges the parameters and paradigms of the mainstream. In many ways, LDS practice seems to transcend the social and economic structures that underlie American values. As explained by several members during the course of the production, the LDS conception of the family is such that it is not merely a secular social unit, but a spiritual one. The integrity of the family can persist even beyond human life, and as such, it transcends and is stronger than any social unit. Perhaps the system of priorities engendered by this worldview is inherently subversive, in that it is indicative of adherence to a higher authority than that which is put in place by social structures. This may, in fact, be subversive or even if the law or social structure is not directly threatened. It may be construed as a tacit rejection of the unifying values of American society.

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Paradoxically, though, both the history and the current expression and practice of Latter-day Saints also make it uniquely expressive of America’s fundamental promise of religious freedom.

In the popular opinion, the American distrust of Muslims ostensibly originated with the terrorist attacks of 9/11; however, there is no shortage of evidence that ‘Islamophobia’ significantly predates that devastating event. In the western fear of Islam we see a type of jingoism, and a tendency to view as less modern or evolved cultural elements and belief systems that are very different from one’s own. The discrimination against Mormons and that against Muslims has had a somewhat different trajectory; however, as demonstrated, many elements are shared, just as many aspects of practice and outlook are either similar or compatible. These two elements - shared discrimination, and a compatible system of beliefs - form the impetus behind an interfaith partnership between members of the Mormon and Muslim faiths. However, this in itself does not imply that such an alliance would serve anything other than a general concept that there is solidarity in numbers, and that individuals similarly persecuted should ‘stick together.’ There are enough similarities in terms of belief and practice in order to make the two groups comfortable with one another, as expressed by individuals taking part in the study. However, the potential benefits transcend even this valuable sense of solidarity.
An interfaith alliance between Muslims and Mormons could potentially have far-reaching and compelling benefits. In essence, such an alliance could lead to greater cross-cultural understanding, something that is sorely needed in today's world. ‘Islamophobia’ has been rampant in the West, and particularly in the United States, since 9/11, although the term was coined decades earlier. Social and professional exclusion of Muslim individuals was documented throughout the 1980s and 90s, only to worsen following the terrorist attacks of 2001. Since that time, the specter of an ancient and destructive enmity between two civilizations and faiths has been evoked in political rhetoric, potentially deepening the divisions between them. In the meantime, the anti-American and anti-western feeling that was expressed in its most extreme and fanatical form by the terrorist attacks themselves was based in part on the vast differences in outlook between mainstream Americans and Muslims. Alliance with the Mormon faith has the potential to bring about a greatly improved understanding between these two religions, to the benefit of all. Mormonism is a home-grown American faith, once marginalized, but is now thoroughly integrated into American society. Despite the discrimination that

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members still face, the origins of the religion and its current flourishing are a result of the traditional and deeply held American belief in religious freedom. As such, the LDS Church offers an alternate view of America to the world community. Western liberal values and secularism have diffused worldwide, offering a picture of one strong facet of American culture. A global consciousness of the LDS Church and its adherents could potentially modify this view, demonstrating that a plurality of values and lifestyles exist in America. Through a cooperative interfaith relationship with the world Muslim community, Latter-day Saints could demonstrate to the world that not all Americans embrace the same set of values.  

Moreover, Americans themselves could achieve an improved international consciousness through the interfaith relationship between Mormons and Muslims, the benefits of which could potentially extend beyond these two groups. This is, in short, a time and an opportunity for America to redefine what it stands for, and how tolerant and inclusive it is able and willing to be toward those of diverse faiths and lifestyles. In essence, the widespread

11 Muslims and Christians: The Troubled Interface, Daniel C. Peterson, professor of Islamic studies and Arabic, BYU. Available online <http://kennedy.byu.edu/archive/#368> see: video time 33:50-37:20. Dr. Peterson relates a story of meeting with Saudi religious leaders accompanied by US State Department officials. Dr. Peterson explains that the reason behind bringing the Muslim religious leaders to Salt Lake City was to counteract stereotypes prevalent in the Muslim world about Americans being amoral, unreligious and atheists. His conclusion was that by visiting an American city like Salt Lake City, with a rich religious history, the Muslim scholars were given the opportunity to see another side of American life that shares many of the same moral standards found in Islam.

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acceptance of Latter-day Saints constitutes an opportunity for America to go back to its roots with regard to the foundational belief in religious tolerance. In turn, the LDS Church, through overtures to the Muslim community, has the potential to act as a vehicle through which international and cross-cultural overtures may be made, and relationships healed. These potentialities are demonstrative of the highest social objectives and benefits of religion. Through a cooperative interfaith relationship, the Muslim and LDS communities could provide a range of benefits for their own adherents and for the larger national and international community.
EPILOGUE

Mormon-Muslim inter-religious dialogue did not start out as my thesis project. Only after a tragedy in my family caused me to cut my research in Jordan short was I lead to redirect my research to Mormon-Muslim relations. My passion for interfaith relations evolved from a semester abroad as an undergraduate student in Jerusalem with Brigham Young University. During my study abroad I choose to study Arabic and take an introductory course in Islam. During my time in Jerusalem I was invited into many homes of the local Arab population. It was through these personal contacts that I began to open my heart and mind to realize that Muslims were not caricatures of hate too often depicted on TV. In fact, during my sojourn in the Holy Land, two things became evident to me, first, that as Americans, we receive very little accurate information about Arabs and Muslims. Second, that Mormons and Muslims have much in common. Until these personal experiences I had sadly viewed Arabs and Muslims as completely different from myself.

My time in the Holy Land inspired me to change my major to International Relations with a Middle East focus. However, I didn’t become passionately involved in Mormon-Muslim relations until after September 11, 2001.
Soon after graduation in 2001, I relocated to New York City for work. Little could I imagine that just one week later I would stand in my office of the World Financial Building and watch the second plane go into the World Trade Towers. This was incredibly devastating for the nation in general, but in particular it was a time of great confusion and fear regarding Arabs and Muslims. After some soul searching I decided to return to Washington DC to pursue my studies in international relations at Georgetown University. My goal was to contribute to building bridges of understanding between America and Muslims by studying at the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding.

The first Mormon-Muslim interfaith event came about when one day I was riding the Georgetown bus from the Rosslyn metro to campus and I over heard two Arab students talking about Ramadan in Arabic. I introduced myself and asked them if there were Ramadan events being held on campus. I told them about my study abroad experience in Jerusalem and told them there were many fellow BYU Jerusalem alumni in the Washington DC area that might be interested in participating as well. They recommended I speak with one of their newest converts to Islam, Alyson Carpenter. As luck would have it she was also on the Ramadan events committee. Alyson was extremely enthusiastic about a Mormon-Muslim Ramadan event and single handedly convinced the Muslim Student Association to support the event. Alyson and I
later discussed the fact the perhaps we are both passionate about interfaith relations because we both are converts to our faith, and both come from families who are very devote in a different faith.

Within a month of first meeting Alyson the first Mormon-Muslim Ramadan dinner was held on Georgetown campus in 2002. Originally I invited only BYU Jerusalem alumni living in the Washington DC area. However, I soon had many requests from the larger Mormon community to attend. I believe this was largely due to the fact that the Nation was still healing from 9/11 and Islam remained a mystery for most Americans, Mormons included. LDS participants expressed appreciation for an event specifically for a LDS audience. Therefore with minimal planning or promotion, our first event had nearly 100 Mormons in attendance. Mormons were asked to join the Muslims in fasting for Ramadan and break their fast in solidarity with their Muslim brothers and sisters that evening. The fact that all of the participants had been fasting together that day brought a very special feeling to the event. This feeling is hard to describe because it is spiritual in nature. However, through all the events we began to refer to it as the X-factor. The X-factor began to represent the feeling of love, brotherhood, empathy, and many other positive feelings that were expressed by nearly all the participants and volunteers at the events.
From this first event friendships were made and Mormons were invited to join the Muslim Student Association sponsored “Fast-a-Thon.” The Fast-a-Thon is a Muslim Student Association campaign during Ramadan that helps to raise money to feed the needy through business sponsorship. For every person who completes that day’s fast, money is donated to various charities in the Washington DC area. Mormons were the largest non-Muslim group to participate and received an honorable mention from the Imam at the Fast-a-Thon iftar that year. Through LDS participation hundreds of dollars were raised to feed the needy alongside their Muslim friends. Additionally, many other relationships were reported as Mormons and Muslims invited each other to social and charitable events.

For months following our first event I was approached by strangers who would relate many positive experiences they had had at the event or had heard about from their friend/sibling/roommate etc. They expressed how interesting it was to hear how much we have in common with Muslims. All expressed a desire to attend another event. Alyson and I then discussed making this an annual event at Georgetown.

The events continued to grow, and by 2003 we had over 200 participants and even had to turn away individuals due to space limitations. By 2004 we set up two events, one at Georgetown University, where such
honored guests as the Syrian Consulate was in attendance, and one at the
Church’s Institute of Religion building not far from campus. Each event was on
a different day but we found that Mormons were willing to fast even if it was
outside of their typical fasting day. The events continued to foster friendships
which lead to further collaborative charitable work. An article was even
published in the Church’s newspaper regarding the event.\(^1\)

Interest continued to spread among both communities. Muslims were
excited that Mormons in the Washington DC area had a sincere desire to learn
about Islam, to help dispel inaccurate information and misconceptions about
Islam. In particular we began to realize that many Mormons in Washington DC
worked in all facets of government. We had participants who worked for
Congress, the White House, Foreign Service and even some from Intelligent
Agencies. One friend from such an agency expressed how valuable it was for
him to be able to attend such a spiritual event shared with Muslims. He
admitted that while his job was as an analyst primarily dealing with Muslim
countries he was never able to get to know sincere Muslims in such a positive
atmosphere of learning and exchange. Knowing that we were helping to build
such bridges of understanding, perhaps more than anything else, was what
inspired us to continue the events.

\(^1\) See Appendix E, *LDS and Muslims Share Respect at Ramadan*, 102-103.
College students who attended were excited to meet other young adults with similar high standards of chastity and abstinence from drugs and alcohol. Students from the many surrounding Universities such as George Washington, American, Catholic, and George Mason noted that on a college campus where many students are embracing their new freedom away from home with parties and drinking, Mormons and Muslims stood out to support each other in living their respective religions. At Georgetown University in particular, Mormons and Muslims began to request housing together based on the fact they shared similar high moral standards.

In order to continue to cultivate this unique relationship between Mormons and Muslims we formed *Muslims and Latter-day Saints United for Values (MLUV)*. By organizing MLUV we were able to galvanize support for further collaboration such as the designing of a website, www.mluvinterfaith.org. The website allowed us to share our events, research, and literature with a larger audience. The introduction reads as follows:

Since 2002, the organization “Muslims and Latter-day Saints United for Values” (MLUV) in association with the Muslim Student Association (MSA) of Georgetown University with broad LDS member support, has sponsored an interfaith dinner during the month of Ramadan to promote dialogue and friendship between Mormons and Muslims. Encouraging such dialogue has required little more than bringing individuals together, as there is much that members of these two faith communities have in common. Both believe in personal integrity and family unity, and hold a conviction that commitment to one’s faith produces better individuals
and a better society. Both Mormons and Muslims understand what it is like to hold values that are unusual and perhaps unpopular in the view of mainstream American culture. In the hope of giving more people an opportunity to participate in similar interfaith events, “Muslims and Latter-day Saints United for Values” was formed. We hope to continue working with our two communities in order to bring Muslims and Latter-day Saints together to build bridges of peace, love and understanding.2

Once MLUV was established, a committee was organized to plan a Mormon-Muslim interfaith event outside of Ramadan, 2005. The event was on a larger scale and targeted prominent business and religious leaders from both communities. Fund raising efforts allowed us to fly in keynote speakers and provide dinner. Originally there were approximately 350 participants who RSVPed however, due to the threat of a hurricane there were approximately 200 Mormons and Muslims in attendance. The format was similar to previous years starting with an introduction, followed by an explanation and translation of the Muslim ritual prayer (salat), followed by an invitation for all Muslims to pray and all non-Muslims to watch.3 After prayer, dinner was served and during dinner brief talks are given followed by a Q&A session.

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3 We found that it is important to invite the LDS participants to watch the Muslim prayer otherwise they may feel uncomfortable to do so since in the LDS tradition when one person is praying the others show respect by bowing their heads and closing their eyes.
Donna Lee Bowen a professor from Brigham Young University who had written on Mormon-Muslim comparisons and Jerald Dirks, Muslim and Author of *The Cross and the Crescent* and *Abraham: The Friend of God* were our featured speakers. The theme of the event was "United in Family and Social Values." Topics included Mormon and Muslim perspectives on family and on the role of the individual in society. Invitations to the event emphasized the event as an opportunity to form new friendships and reinforce common bonds of belief.

The event generated a lot of interest, for example a member from the Ahmadiyya Muslim community attended, Salman Sajid. This led to several interfaith events between our two communities. His wife and head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim interfaith committee, Alia Sajid, established relationships with local Relief Society presidents and regularly invited Mormon sisters to speak at their events. Events were later held at George Mason University, as well as the Ahmadiyya Mosque in Maryland, featuring Mormon-Muslim relations. There are numerous stories that are similar examples of relationships forged during the mutual day of fasting.

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4 Relief Society is the women’s auxiliary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
October of 2007 was our first attempt to organize a similar event outside of the Washington DC area. Events were held in Las Vegas, L.A., and on the BYU campus\textsuperscript{5} in Provo Utah, to name a few. The Las Vegas event, in particular, received overwhelming support by both the Church’s public affairs office as well as the support from local Imam, Dr. Aslam Abdullah in Las Vegas.

200 LDS leaders, stake presidents, bishops and others holding various leadership positions attended the event at the local mosque.\textsuperscript{6} The Muslim community was particularly welcoming to the Mormon community because there was already a good working relationship. Nevada Senator Harry Reid had visited the mosque in previous years to show support for the Muslim constituency after 9/11.

Since the events of 2007 I have once again moved to the Middle East where I currently teach at the University of Nizwa in Oman. While I am not as active in Mormon-Muslim interfaith relations it remains my sincere desire that the interfaith efforts of MLUV will continue to be built upon and that eventually Interfaith work will become an integrated formalized institution within the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

\textsuperscript{5} See Appendix F, \textit{Invitation to Interfaith Ramadan}, Brigham Young University, 104-105.

\textsuperscript{6} See Appendix G, \textit{Invitation to State Presidents in Las Vegas}, 106-107.
APPENDIX A:

INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM

Dr. Chad Emmett: Brigham Young University

1. Islam means submission, as in submitting to God.

2. A Muslim (Moslem) is a person who submits to God.

3. The religion is called Islam and the adherents are called Muslims.

Five Pillars of Islam

1. Creed (shahada)—“There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger”

2. Prayer (salat)—five times a day towards Mecca

3. Fasting (saum)—during daylight hours during the month of Ramadan

4. Alms (zakat)—to the poor

5. Pilgrimage (hajj)—once in a lifetime to Mecca

Similarities between Mormons and Muslims

1. Belief and faith in One God—Allah is Arabic for God which stems from the same Semitic root as Elohim. Mormons in Indonesia and the Arab world pray to Allah.

2. Daily prayer

3. Regular fasting (Muslims fast for the month of Ramadan, Mormons abstain from food and drink for two meals on the first Sunday of every month)

4. Regular donations to help the poor (Zakat for Muslims, Tithing and Fast Offerings for Mormons).

5. Once in a lifetime participation in a required sacred rite (pilgrimage to Mecca, endowment in a Mormon Temple)

7. Judaism and Christianity lost truth, thus there was a need for a restoration. (Mohammad and Joseph Smith restored truth).

8. Holy Scriptures (Quran or Koran for Muslims, Bible and Book of Mormon for Mormons).


10. Modesty of dress.

11. Importance of family (Muslims work with Mormons on UN family issues).

12. Code of health. (Both abstain from alcohol, Mormon don’t drink coffee or tea, Muslims don’t eat pork).

13. Angels (to help us) and Satan (to tempt us).

14. The coming of the Messiah or Mahdi.

15. Final Judgment and Resurrection.

16. Good Works (for Muslims, if good works out weigh the bad, then you go to paradise).

17. Fast growing, universalizing religions that seek converts. All are welcome---black and white, bond and free.

18. Striving (jihad) to be good, to help others, to spread the faith, to protect your family.

19. No idols or graven images.

20. Both religions deal with challenges of fundamentalists and fanatics.

21. Tolerance and respect for others. Christians and Jews are accepted in Islam as “People of the Book” who also follow God and His prophets.

**Differences between Mormons and Muslims**

1. Muslims believe Jesus was a great prophet but not the Son of God or the Redeemer.
2. Muslims believe God was not begotten, nor does He beget children. We are His creation but not His children.

3. Up to four wives are allowed in Islam if the husband can properly provide.

4. Mohammad was the “seal of the prophets”—no prophets after him.

5. No priesthood in Islam

Recommended readings:


Abraham Divided: An LDS Perspective on the Middle East, By Daniel C. Peterson.

In a speech to BYU students in 1979, Elder Howard W. Hunter in a talk entitled "All Are Alike Unto God," said: "Both Jews and the Arabs are children of our Father. They are both children of promise, and as a church we do not take sides. We have a love and interest in each. The purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to bring about love, unity, and brotherhood of the highest order."
APPENDIX B:

THE ARTICLES OF FAITH OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

1. We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

2. We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.

3. We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

4. We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

5. We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

6. We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.

7. We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.

8. We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

9. We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

10. We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.
11. We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.

12. We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.

13. We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

Joseph Smith
APPENDIX C:

ECCLESIASTICAL ENDORSEMENT

MY WORD OF HONOR

I am currently living the Honor Code and will continue to do so. Any previous issue involving the Honor Code has been completely resolved with my authorized bishop or ecclesiastical leader. I have read and discussed the attached Honor Code information with my ecclesiastical leader. I understand what the Honor Code is and that my obligation is to live the Honor Code, including the Dress and Grooming Standards, both on and off campus and between semesters. I also understand that I should contact the Honor Code Office if clarification is needed.

Ecclesiastical Endorsement

Students desiring to attend the BYU commit to live the ideals and principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to maintain the standards of conduct as taught by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. By requesting clearance to take classes at the BYU Salt Lake Center, individuals reconfirm their commitment to observe these standards. Ecclesiastical leaders must complete their section of Form B and mail, fax, or deliver Forms A and B to: BYU Salt Lake Center, 345 West North Temple St., 3 Triad Center, Salt Lake City, UT 84180. Fax: (801) 933-9456. E-mail: slc@byu.edu.

First-time students must be initially endorsed by (1) the bishop of the ward in which they live that holds their current Church membership record and the president of the stake in which they currently reside. 2) Thereafter, students must be annually endorsed by the bishop of the ward in which they live that holds their current Church membership record.

Students of other faiths must be endorsed by (1) the local ecclesiastical leader if the student is an active member of the congregation, (2) the bishop of the LDS ward in which they currently reside, or (3) the nondenominational BYU chaplain.
The Honor Code

Brigham Young University, Brigham Young University-Hawaii, Brigham Young University-Idaho, and LDS Business College exist to provide an education in an atmosphere consistent with the ideals and principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That atmosphere is created and preserved through commitment to conduct that reflects those ideals and principles. Members of the faculty, administration, staff, and student body at BYU and affiliate CES schools are selected and retained from among individuals who voluntarily live the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Observance of such is a specific condition of employment and admission.

Those individuals who are not members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are also expected to maintain the same standards of conduct, except church attendance. All who represent BYU, BYU-H, BYU-I, and LDSBC are to maintain the highest standards of honor, integrity, morality, and consideration of others in personal behavior. By accepting appointment on the faculty, continuing in employment, or continuing class enrollment, individuals evidence their commitment to observe the Honor Code standards approved by the Board of Trustees “at all times and... in all places.” (Mosiah 18:9)

We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men... If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things. (Thirteenth Article of Faith)

As a matter of personal commitment, students, faculty, and staff of Brigham Young University, Brigham Young University-Hawaii, Brigham Young University-Idaho, and LDS Business College seek to demonstrate in daily living on and off campus those moral virtues encompassed in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and will:

- Be honest
- Obey the law and all campus policies
- Live a chaste and virtuous life
- Observe Dress and Grooming Standards
- Use clean language
- Respect others
- Participate regularly in church services
• Abstain from alcoholic beverages, tobacco, tea, coffee, and substance abuse
• Encourage others in their commitment to comply with the Honor Code

**Dress and Grooming Standards**

The dress and grooming standards of both men and women should always be modest, neat, and clean, and consistent with the dignity adherent to representing The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and any of its institutions of higher education. These standards are further outlined in the Church publication, For the Strength of Youth. The Dress and Grooming Standards are as follows:

Men: Hairstyles should be clean and neat, avoiding extreme styles or colors and trimmed above the collar, leaving the ear uncovered. Sideburns should not extend below the earlobe or onto the cheek. If worn, mustaches should be neatly trimmed and may not extend beyond or below the corners of the mouth. Men are expected to be clean-shaven; beards are not acceptable. Earrings and other body piercing are not acceptable. Shoes should be worn in public campus areas. Clothing is inappropriate when it is sleeveless, revealing, or form-fitting.

Women: Clothing is inappropriate when it is sleeveless, strapless, backless, or revealing; has slits above the knee; or is form-fitting. Dresses, skirts, and shorts must be knee-length or longer. Hairstyles should be clean and neat, avoiding extreme styles and colors. Excessive ear piercing (more than one per ear) and all other body piercing are not acceptable. Shoes should be worn in public campus areas. Please visit the BYU website for specific dress and grooming standards at http://honorcode.byu.edu.

**Academic Honesty**

BYU students should be totally honest in their dealings with others. They should complete their own work and be evaluated based upon that work. They should avoid academic dishonesty and misconduct in all its forms, including plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, cheating, and other academic misconduct. Students are responsible not only to adhere to the Honor code requirement to be honest, but also to assist other students in fulfilling their commitment to be honest. (A complete version of Academic Honesty Policy is available at www.byu.edu/honorcode)
Applicable Actions for the University

The university may elect to place an affected student on probation or suspend or dismiss the student and place a temporary or permanent notation on the student’s permanent academic transcript that he or she was suspended or dismissed due to academic misconduct. The university may report an incident of academic misconduct to appropriate law enforcement officials and may prosecute an affected student if the act in question involves the commission of a crime (e.g., breaking into an office or building stealing an examination, etc.).

Honor Code Office Involvement

The Honor Code Office will maintain a record of all violations of the Academic Honesty Policy reported to it by the faculty. If the occurrence is sufficiently egregious or if a pattern of dishonesty or misconduct is discovered, the Honor Code Office may take additional action on behalf of the university based upon the nature of the infraction(s). The Honor Code Office, in consultation with the involved academic personnel, including the BYU Salt Lake Center Director and the Associate Academic Vice President-Undergraduate Studies, may determine to place a student on probation or to recommend suspension or dismissal from the University for Academic Dishonesty and other forms of academic misconduct.

Conduct

All students shall be required to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the BYU Honor Code. Furthermore, all students are required to abstain from possessing, serving, or consuming alcoholic beverages, tobacco, tea, coffee, or harmful drugs. Involvement with gambling; pornographic, erotic, or indecent material; disorderly, obscene, or indecent conduct of expressions; or with other offensive materials, expressions, or conduct or disruption of the peace that, in the sole discretion and judgment of the university, is inconsistent with the principles of the Church and the BYU Honor Code, is not permitted.
Student Commitment and Confidential Report

To Be Completed by Current Ecclesiastical Leaders

Bishop/Branch President’s Interview: If the prospective student’s Church membership record is not in your unit, the interview should not continue until the record has been obtained. Please answer the questions below as they relate to the student’s commitment to the Honor Code and Church service and participation.

◊ LDS ◊ Not a Member of the LDS Church

A. ◊Yes ◊No Is the individual’s Church membership record in your unit? If no, please contact the previous bishop or branch president.

B. ◊Yes ◊No I have thoroughly reviewed all the instructions and requirements contained in the Honor Code from the previous page with the individual and the individual has been and is now abiding by these standards and will continue to do so.

C. ◊Yes ◊No I have thoroughly reviewed all the instructions and requirements contained in the Dress & Grooming Standards from the previous page with the individual, and the individual has been and is now abiding by these standards and will continue to do so.

D. ◊Yes ◊No Does the individual demonstrate sufficient respect and maturity to succeed and to live in harmony with others in a potentially stressful environment?

E. ◊Yes ◊No Does the individual have a real and personal desire to attend BYU?

F. Please inquire of the individual with regard to each of the following specific standards and guidelines:

If the applicant answers "no" to any part of Question F, the Individual is not eligible for clearance until these issues have been completely resolved. (Refer to "Instructions to interviewing officer" on the previous page) Please explain this to the applicant and do not mail this form.
◊ Yes ◊ No  Is the individual currently in full fellowship (without any informal or formal probation, disfellowshipped, excommunicated, or voluntarily disaffiliated from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)?

◊ Yes ◊ No  Does the individual live a chaste and virtuous life, including avoidance of pornography, abstinence from sexual relations outside of marriage, and abstinence from homosexual conduct?

◊ Yes ◊ No  Does the individual live the Word of Wisdom, by abstaining from alcoholic beverages, tobacco, coffee, tea, and drug abuse?

◊ Yes ◊ No  If LDS, does the individual demonstrate appropriate and consistent Church activity?

◊ Yes ◊ No  Is the applicant honest?

G. ◊ Yes ◊ No  * Do you recommend this individual for clearance to attend BYU? (* Please inform the individual of your non-recommendation.)

Stake/District Presidency Interview:

H. ◊ Yes ◊ No  Do you recommend this individual for clearance to attend BYU? (* Please inform the individual of your non-recommendation.)

Comments: (Please share any insights, concerns, unique circumstances, or other factors that should be considered in the evaluation of this individual’s request for clearance to attend BYU.)
Commitment Review:

I have thoroughly interviewed the student with regard to living the Honor Code, which includes Dress and Grooming Standards, Academic Honesty; and for LDS students, attending his or her meetings, doing his or her duty in the Church, and abiding by the rules and standards of the Church. I give my endorsement.

Bishop/Branch President                                Stake/District President
____________________________________________________________________

Name (please print)                                Name (please print)

I certify that I have been striving to live the Honor Code and will continue to do so. Any previous issue involving the Honor Code has been completely resolved with my authorized ecclesiastical leader. I understand what the Honor Code is and that my obligation is to live all aspects of the Honor Code, both on and off campus and between semesters.

Student

Name (please print)
APPENDIX D:
QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What were your favorite thing/s about this event?

2. What were your least favorite thing/s about this event?

3. If Mormon, did you learn any new or surprising facts about Islam that you could relate to especially as a Latter-day Saint? Please explain.

4. If Muslim did you learn any new or surprising facts about Mormonism that you could relate to as a Muslim? Please explain.

5. If Mormon, have you ever attended events during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan? Through school, work or other?

6. If Muslim, have you ever attended an LDS sponsored event before?

7. If Mormon, do you think you would have attended a Ramadan event had this not been offered?

8. If Mormon, did you find it helpful to learn about Islam in a setting geared toward Latter-day Saints?

9. If Muslim, what were you impressions of having a Ramadan event geared towards Latter-day Saints?

10. Did you make friends of a religion other than your own at the event? Did you exchange phone numbers or email addresses?

11. Would you be interested in attending another event in Washington DC (not during Ramadan or Christian Holidays) intended to represent both the LDS faith as well as Islam equally with speakers such as a Bishop and Imam (for example) as keynote speakers?

12. Would you be interested in volunteering as a speaker, organizer, helper, photographer, etc. etc.? If so, please explain.

13. Would you be interested in participating in joint-service projects for Mormons and Muslims? If so please describe the kind of events you would be interested
in. If you have suggestions or would like to host such an event please indicate your contact information so one of the MLUV volunteers.

14. Do you feel your faith was adequately represented during the event?

15. What was the most important thing you wanted to convey about your religion?

16. What, if any, were the most interesting points of commonality to learned about tonight?

17. What were your reasons/goals for attending today’s Mormon-Muslim interfaith Ramadan dinner?

18. Do you feel that having the interfaith event during the mutual day of fasting made an impact on the interaction tonight? For example, if you have been to other interfaith events where fasting wasn’t a focus, how would they compare to this event?

19. In your opinion what do you think is needed to make Mormon-Muslim relations reach its greatest potential?

20. Do you have any further comments? Suggestions? Constructive criticisms, which would help us make these events better?
APPENDIX E:

LDS AND MUSLIMS SHARE RESPECT AT RAMADAN

November 27, 2004

By Burke Jensen

WASHINGTON, D.C. — More than 200 Church members joined with Muslims in the Washington, D.C., area recently to celebrate the holy month of Ramadan and to show respect toward another world faith.

They met on two consecutive evenings for dinner to end a day of fasting and discussed common beliefs and practices. The evening meals were designed to help Church members gain a greater understanding of the Muslim religion.

The idea for a Ramadan dinner stemmed from discussions three years ago between Allison Carpenter, a Muslim convert, and Rachel Sage, a convert to the Church. They met while attending a lecture at Georgetown University. After a few discussions they decided to organize a dinner during Ramadan to discuss the similarities between the faiths.

Even after organizing a second evening, many people were turned away for lack of seating.

Sister Sage, a BYU Jerusalem Center alumnus and graduate student studying Muslim and Christian relations, felt a desire to organize these dinners following the September 11th terrorist attacks.

"I was almost killed in the attacks," she said. "Yet, having lived in Jerusalem, I knew those terrorists were not true Muslims. That event changed my life. I had a desire to show others that the Muslim faith isn't about terrorism, but the opposite."

These dinners are one of the many efforts by Sister Sage to help mend public understanding of Muslims.

During the dinner Sister Sage told the audience that if any faith can relate to being misrepresented, it would be The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
"Most people think about the fundamentalists who practice polygamy when they think about our Church," she explained. "We know they aren't true members, but others think they are. Muslims face a similar misrepresentation. Terrorist strikes and suicide bombings flood the news headlines on a daily basis. But Jihad, one of their core beliefs, is about the internal struggle — similar to our enduring to the end. It has nothing to do with terrorism."

The first evening meal was held at Georgetown University. The next dinner was held at BYU's Barlow Center in Washington, D.C., commemorating the end of the daily fast for Muslims, and the monthly fast for Church members.

The evenings included Muslim prayers, an explanation of the prayers, dinner and various talks by Muslims about their faith.

Two Muslims sat at each table to answer questions, allowing for informal discussion.

Common beliefs such as modesty, morality, abstaining from alcohol, accountability before God, the desire to be an instrument for God and increased spirituality through fasting and study of holy writ were discussed.

Jawdat Ali, a Muslim and the First Secretary for the Embassy of Syria in Washington, felt the dinner served as a creative and unique opportunity for all involved to understand others.

"I was very much interested in the ideas," Ali said. "It gives me hope for a better future."

Heather Boushley, a local member, felt the dinner was an eye-opening and life-changing event.

"I think every LDS person should have an evening as such — and every Muslim for that matter," Sister Boushley said.

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APPENDIX F:

MORMON MUSLIM INTERFAITH EVENT BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

YOU ARE INVITED TO A MORMON-MUSLIM FAST SEPTEMBER 30th 2007

What: Potluck interfaith break-the-fast Why: To build bridges of understanding in the spirit of fasting and inter-religious dialogue.

Did you know that once a year the LDS Fast-Sunday coincides with the Muslim month of fasting called Ramadan? An interfaith organization, which originated at Georgetown University called “Muslims and Latter-day Saints United for Values” (MLUV) has been holding Mormon-Muslim “break-the-fast” on this mutual day of fasting since 2002 and now we want to try it at BYU!

In a recent talk by President Boyd K. Packer, he stated, “Church members and Muslims share similar high standards of decency, temperance, and morality. We have so much in common. As societal morality and behavior decline in an increasingly permissive world, the Church and many within Islam increasingly share natural affinities.”

We invite you to experience this special opportunity to fast together--Mormons and Muslims in the spirit of unity and understanding!

Ramadan is a spiritual month in which those of the Muslim faith fast from sunrise to sunset. We invite you to accept an invitation to fast with a Muslim in your community or extend the invitation yourself, on September 30th, 2007.

In previous years, Mormons and Muslims who have participated have experienced great bonds of brother and sisterhood. It was a unique opportunity to appreciate each other and to ask candid questions regarding Islam and Muslim lifestyle and beliefs. It is a great opportunity to enrich our common beliefs.

Here are some comments from those who attended similar events in previous years:
What an honor to participate! It was tastefully done and I truly enjoyed everything that I learned—what beautiful people the Muslims are! It really touched me when the young man shared that once we all set aside our doctrinal differences; we share the same pursuit of truth, honesty, integrity and justice. I look forward to participating in the future.

This spirit of reaching out without prejudice or guile will be remembered and the start of something great.

What an incredible experience! I enjoyed it more than I can say. And I learned so much about Muslims and Islam. I have a great deal of respect for the beliefs and teachings of Islam and those that follow it. Having the opportunity to sit down and discuss so frankly and openly what others believe in was a unique, unmatched opportunity. I wish that more people could have participated.

This is a unique spiritual opportunity for inter-religious dialogue and bridge building. Please take part in joining our two communities, to learn from each other, forge new friendships and foster understanding. For more information on how to participate or plan your own interfaith Mormon-Muslim Ramadan dinner, please visit www.MLUVinterfaith.org.
APPENDIX G:

INVITATION TO STAKE PRESIDENTS TO
"BREAK-THE-FAST" WITH OUR MUSLIM NEIGHBORS
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

Dear Stake President & Family:

We would like to invite you and your family (12 years of age and older) to join us for a unique opportunity to build bridges of friendship and understanding with our Muslim neighbors here in Southern Nevada. We have been invited by the Las Vegas Muslim Community to break your fast on September 30th at an Inter-Faith dinner being hosted by the Las Vegas Muslim Community.

Many of you may already know that Ramadan, the Muslim’s holy month of fasting, is a spiritual time in which those of the Muslim faith fast from sunrise to sunset. Consequently, once a year, the LDS Fast Sunday coincides with the Muslim month of fasting. We invite you to experience this special opportunity to break your fast together, Mormons and Muslims, in the spirit of unity and understanding on September 30th, 2007.

The event will be held at The Islamic Society of Nevada, 4730 E. Desert Inn Road. Due to the Muslim fast ending exactly at sunset we kindly ask that you arrive no later than 6pm.

The evening will consist of brief 10-15 minute remarks by both LDS and Muslim leaders, with the conclusion of the dinner to finish by 8:30pm. Our goal is to fulfill the mission of Church PA:

The core purpose of all Church public affairs efforts is to build strategic relationships with opinion leaders who affect the reputation of The Church of Jesus Christ, and whose actions and influence can help or hinder the Church's mission.

When we work strategically and prayerfully, we can establish relationships with opinion leaders who can endorse, authorize, and defend the Church.

By your participation, we will be able to build symbolic bridges of friendship & understanding as mentioned in a recent talk by President Boyd K. Packer. “Church members and Muslims share similar high standards of decency, temperance, and
morality. We have so much in common. As societal morality and behavior decline in an increasingly permissive world, the Church and many within Islam increasingly share natural affinities.”

Indeed in previous years, Mormons and Muslims who have participated in similar events throughout the world which have resulted in bonds of brother and sisterhood between us. Encouraging such dialogue has required little more than bringing individuals together, as there is much that members of these two faith communities have in common.

Please join us for dinner and dialogue for this unique and spiritual opportunity designed to build bridges of friendship and understanding. Your presence will be greatly appreciated as we endeavor to better understand our Muslim friends and neighbors.

Please inform me or Brother Hall at your earliest convenience if you and your family can attend.

Sincerely,

President Ace Robison, Chairman
Las Vegas Multi Stake Public Affairs Council
BIBLIOGRAPHY


