

## RESPECT

Tolerance begins with respect for others who may be different. Religious beliefs, practices, and symbols that differ from one's own may not be easily acceptable, unless efforts are made to understand them. Failure to do this leads to prejudice and even hostility.

For everyone, religion is very precious and has deeply significant meaning, irreverence, disrespect, contempt, and hurtful words about another person's faith tradition are very distressing. The anguish felt when places of worship are damaged and desecrated, goes far beyond the inconvenience of having to replace costly damaged property.

## SENSITIVITY

Tolerance calls for sensitivity and the realization that religion is important to everyone. Fear of others can cause intolerance and acts of disrespect. Care should be taken to be aware of other people's religious beliefs and practices. Offence can be caused through ignorance about other's faith traditions.

## KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

All people seek truth about God, life, our human



condition, and the hereafter. No one can claim to have complete knowledge of God. Absolute truth is beyond human grasp. God is revealed through many ways to people in different times and in different situations. This explains the rich diversity of faiths. God is beyond human ownership. God owns all humans and all creation. Claims that one particular religion is the only true way to God belittle the mystery of God and cannot be substantiated.

## ONE GOD, MANY GODS

The diversity of human experience of the Divine is expressed in the many different ways. There are different concepts of God in the three major religious traditions present in Fiji. Christians define God as Holy Trinity, One God in Three Persons; Hindus may use many expressions of the God in a variety of Gods and Goddesses; Muslims are strong in their belief in the Oneness of God.

However, one concept of God is common to the three religions God is the Creator of all people, the universe and all that is in it. It follows that all people are equal before God whatever religious beliefs they hold.

## PRAYING TOGETHER

Prayer is an activity that is common to all humans

whatever their particular concept of God. Everyone feels the need to acknowledge the Divine power, and to offer praise to the Creator. All people turn to some power greater than human in times of trouble, and people naturally entreat God for their daily needs. Because this is a common need, it is something we should feel able to do together, however different our understanding of the One to whom we pray.

## DIALOGUE

Fiji's heritage of dialogue, or talanoa is a valuable tool for cultivating respect for the diversity of religious traditions. Through dialogue meaningful relationships can be built between people of different religious beliefs. Dialogue requires that not only do we share our beliefs with others, we listen to them and let them share with us.

In Fiji some religious practices are shared. At times of festivals, for weddings and for funerals we come together across the religious boundaries. Greater respect can be shown on these occasions when people have taken in the time to learn the meanings of the rituals and symbolism. Dialogue with people of other faiths strengthens and deepens one's own convictions and enriches one's understandings.



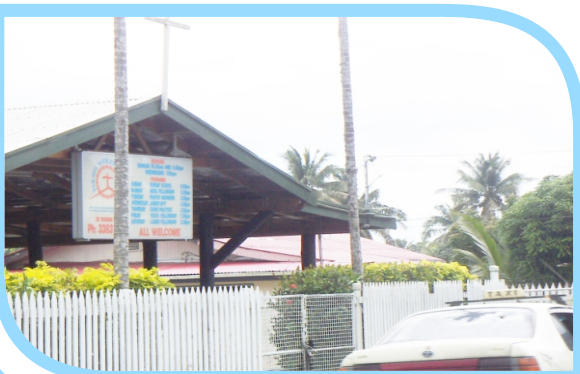


### CONVERSION

Most religions seek to attract new members. This is understandable and praiseworthy so long as the methods used to attract people are not destructive of others religions. New converts may find difficulty in showing respect for the previous religion and need guidance to avoid condemnation of others. Finding a new set of beliefs for oneself does not mean that one can claim any rights over others.

### COMMON GROUND

Entering into dialogue and learning to respect others leads to the revelation that there are many good things that all religions hold in common, such as the search for peace. All religions have good moral teaching. Sometimes we can discover new depths to our own



understandings through conversation with people who have different perspectives. Tolerance requires that all negativity about others is avoided. Common religious ground is a solid base for acceptance and appreciation of the richness of the religious diversity that is our heritage.



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## GUIDELINES FOR RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

