

Memorial from the Diocese of Massachusetts

To the Deputies and Bishops of the Episcopal Church assembled at the 78th General Convention:

As many of our communities are becoming more religiously and culturally diverse, Episcopal lay leaders and clergy can inadvertently bear false witness against one or more other religions by their teaching and preaching. Most of us know some things about the different major world religions, notably Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism, and maybe about Baha'i, Santeria and some other religions. But few of us know much about each of those religions. People who practice them do not appreciate hearing disdainful comments about their religions any more than we do.

Basic interfaith knowledge is essential, and ever more urgent. We want to assure that the church is hospitable to visitors and spiritual seekers who come from diverse backgrounds, and to interfaith families, so we don't diminish the church's credibility for a generation of seekers coming of age in culturally diverse communities. Recent scholarly studies, both historical and theological, are changing the way the Church views a number of other religions. Therefore within the next triennium we would like to see basic educational resources creatively developed, similar to what was developed for Anti-Racism and Safe Church training, for all clergy active in ministry, and all diocesan and parochial lay leaders, with refresher education at regular intervals.

Better knowledge can help us work collaboratively across interfaith lines in our neighborhoods and communities. It expresses our baptismal vow to respect the dignity of every human being. Our sponsorship of this Memorial is evidence of churchwide concern for this matter.

Respectfully submitted by the 229th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, November 8, 2014.