

Northwest University

A Guide to Forming Interfaith Relationships between Christians and Muslims for the Support of
the Uyghur Muslims of Xinjiang, China

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I. Introduction

In today's global political climate, religions are constantly pitted against each other for political gain. Stereotypes are perpetuated, snap judgments are made, and people are consistently the ones who are seriously hurt. There is no question that in a world becoming increasingly globalized that there will be a greater need to understand 'the other.' Christians need to learn to whole-heartedly accept those of other religions while continuing to hold tightly to their own spirituality. This type of acceptance demonstrates how deeply rooted in love, service, and hospitality Christianity is while promoting peace across difficult religious lines. Daniel G. Groody explains: "It remains to be seen whether or not we can learn from mistakes of the past and enable religion to be a reconciling force in the world, or whether it will be a source of destruction that will threaten the human race" (148). Interfaith collaboration can help mitigate these tensions by allowing two disparate people groups to understand each other and even to create community connections for the good of everyone involved. In order to follow their own theology of love and service, individual Christians and churches alike should aim to build intentional relationships with religious minority groups in order to create mutual support so that they may advocate for and support groups such as the Uyghur Muslims, an oppressed minority group from Xinjiang, China. Using the Uyghur Muslims as a case study, this thesis will propose specific steps American Christians could take in order to engage with and advocate for this community.

Using data collected from interviews and academic research, this thesis will identify who the Uyghur are, their history, and how they became the target of the Chinese Communist Party. This will be followed by a discussion of cultural implications of interacting with, supporting, and eventually advocating for the Uyghur and what role Christians might play. This will be followed

by a discussion of themes of hospitality, love, and service that support such action. Then this thesis will explore interfaith cooperation and suggest the benefits that would result if Muslims and Christians were to come together in order to support each other. As an expression of these ideas and ideals, this thesis will include a suggestions guide for Christians who would like to work with marginalized religious groups for the purpose of interfaith support.

Fieldwork

This thesis is largely based on academic research, given that the Uyghur primarily live in China and face serious barriers to communication with the outside world due to government control. Therefore, some interviews were conducted with three U.S.-based Uyghur women.¹ Each woman expressed her own story about how the crackdown on the Uyghur in China has impacted her, her family, and her friends. Other interviews were conducted with church leaders and ministers, as well as two young women involved with church engagement. Fieldwork for this thesis came from an outsider view when discussing the Uyghur. This means that I was not part of the in-group. During these interviews I was a guest that was trying to know more. However, as a Christian, I also identify with the in-group when conversing with the ministers and church engagement subjects. I grew up in the church and have served as a missionary. I have been increasingly frustrated with the way I have observed and experienced the way churches handle interfaith relationships. This makes me part of that in-group (Chrissler-Strater and Sunstein, 2).

¹ The names of the three U.S.-based Uyghur women interviewed have been changed for privacy.

Reflexivity

From 2014 to 2017 I had the privilege to work in Wuhan, the capital of the Hubei province in central China. During my time there I learned a lot about traditional Chinese culture and grew to love and care deeply about the people. However, it was not until I had been back in the United States for a year that I heard of the Uyghur. I was deeply disturbed and intrigued by this ongoing modern-day cultural genocide. I was not sure how I could have lived in a country and yet have had no idea what was happening to this group, despite all of the research I had done on other Chinese minority groups. Greater awareness and advocacy efforts are necessary to make use of the limited avenues for action, and especially to prompt greater involvement and support from those outside of the small Uyghur diaspora population in the U.S.

Interfaith relationship building is an interest that I have not been able to explore due to growing up in a very conservative church culture. When I initially discussed this idea for a thesis with an elder of my congregation, I was told that my opinions had no place in the church, and that I should reconsider my topic. On the same day, I saw many posts on social media from close friends saying that Muslims have no place in the United States. I disagree with this. On the contrary, I believe that interfaith conversations are essential to broaden worldviews and promote acceptance of people who are culturally different. Christians and other moral and religious groups tend to use the term 'Muslim' as an excuse to not support certain groups while also using the term as a reason to fear groups such as the Uyghur. However, interfaith relationships provide a gateway for empathy and compassion to grow, leaving no room for feelings of being scared of the unknown. The Uyghur need these types of conversations so that more people will hear about them and more people will care. This will hopefully lead to greater understanding and more effective action against the tragedy of cultural genocide.

II. Who are the Uyghur?

The Uyghur are an ethnically Turkic, primarily Muslim population that resides in the autonomous region of Xinjiang in western China. Due to their refusal to assimilate to Han culture, being religiously Muslim, and not being of traditional Han descent, they have become a target of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This next section will explain their history in China and the struggles they currently face.

History

One of the challenges to pinning down the early history of the Uyghur is the difference in narratives between the Uyghur and the Han (Ang). Although the Uyghur originally lived on the Mongolian plateau, they have lived in Xinjiang since being displaced by Kyrgyz nomads sometime during the ninth century (Garcia). Although currently Muslim, the Uyghur were originally Shamanistic. They also followed Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Christianity before gradually becoming collectively Islamic between the tenth and seventeenth century (Garcia). Direct Chinese control over Xinjiang did not happen until the middle of the eighteenth century. In the following 100 years, this ethnically Turkic group became officially known as “Uyghur” and established some independence while still being part of China. In 1933, the Uyghur made an official attempt to become an independent state called “East Turkistan.” This effort failed and they tried again in 1944, only to fail again (Garcia). It was not until 1955 that the CCP officially established the Xinjiang Autonomous Region and recognized the Uyghur as one of China’s official fifty-six minorities. This achieved their aim of recognition as separate from other groups such as the Kazakhs, Tajiks, and Kyrgyz (Garcia). Around the same time, the government also implemented incentives to encourage Han Chinese to move to Xinjiang in order to increase the Han population in the province. When this happened, the Uyghur reported more incidents of

ethnic, linguistic, and religious discrimination (Schravenza). Additionally, the Chinese government started to encourage marriage between the Uyghur and Han Chinese. This largely failed due to the Uyghur practice of disowning family members who intermarried, as well as Han and Uyghur social mores against intermarrying. When the Soviet Union broke up in 1991, the Uyghur tried again to become independent, and when that attempt failed, tensions in the region increased. This in turn caused the Uyghur to be seen as a threat (Garcia). For example, after the September 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City, the Chinese government released a document stating that there was a broad network of Uyghur terrorists known as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, a group later labeled by the United States as a terrorist organization as well (Ang). As some experts suggest that the impact and extent of this group is exaggerated, this step was likely at least partially an attempt to take advantage of rising Islamophobia in the west to justify cultural repression with China.

Although the Communist Party made opportunities for the Uyghur to adopt Han culture, many Uyghur continued to resist assimilation because it would mean losing their identity. After the death of two Uyghur in 2009, Uyghur xenophobia against the Han and other ethnic groups residing in Xinjiang was demonstrated during riots in Urumqi, the capital city of Xinjiang. The Uyghur were said to have been chanting things such as “Kill the Han, kill the Hui,” “Cut the Kazaks,” and “Drive the Mongols out” (Friedrichs). During the riot, 200 people were killed, and thousands of injuries were sustained. In response, the Party perceived all Uyghur as extremists and terrorists (Roberts). Since then, there have been sporadic violent incidents between the Uyghur and the Han. The history of the situation boils down to the Uyghur’s desire for independence and resistance to assimilation, and the Chinese government’s desire to define

‘Chineseness’ and control territory that it believes to be historically Chinese, leading both groups to lash out against each other.

Current Situation

To combat the challenges they have with the Uyghur, the CCP has imposed reeducation camps to teach the Uyghur how to be good citizens and to limit the freedoms of those outside the camps. These camps are also widely known as training centers or even concentration camps.

Ben Emmerson QC, a human rights lawyer and advisor to the World Uyghur Congress explains:

“It is very difficult to see (these camps) as anything other than a mass brainwashing scheme designed and directed at an entire ethnic community. It’s a total transformation that is designed specifically to wipe the Muslim Uyghurs of Xinjiang as a separate cultural group off the face of the earth” (“Data Leaks”). Due to limits imposed both inside and outside of the camps, this section will be divided into two categories. The first will explain what is happening outside of the concentration camps, the second is explanation of what is happening inside.

Outside the Camps. In 2016 Chen Quanguo was appointed Communist Party Secretary of Xinjiang. Previously, he was known for the extreme measures he implemented in Tibet, such as increasing the number of police and security checkpoints as well as gaining state control over Buddhist monasteries (Maizland). In Xinjiang, Chen has implemented a grid-management system where cities and villages are split into squares of 500 people. Each square has a police station that closely monitors residents by regularly scanning their identification cards, taking photos and fingerprints, and searching residents’ cell phones to see who they have been in communication with and what has been discussed. Additionally, the government collects DNA and other bio-metric data and stores it as part of a program they call, ‘Physicals for All’ (Maizland). In addition to surveillance measures, mosques have been destroyed under the

pretense that they are too old and unsafe for worshippers, Uyghur cannot give their children Islamic names, Halal food cannot be found, and fasting during Ramadan is seen as an act of extremism. In an effort to share information and promote community with each other the Uyghur began using online forums. A 2017 study by Rebecca Cothey and Emmanuel Koku explains that the Uyghur used internet forums to create solidarity. The forums were widely used as a way to educate each other about what they have seen and experienced as well as share in their collective injustice. Additionally, they used the forums to encourage acts of resistance against the CCP that strengthened their collective group identity.

One U.S.-based Uyghur woman named Aruz, told the story of being on a bus that was raided by police. She was able to escape, but noted she is still traumatized from the experience. Aruz then told a story of moving to Shanghai after she graduated from college. Even though she speaks Chinese fluently, because she is Uyghur, she was denied both an apartment and the job she had been asked to travel to Shanghai to interview for. When the interviewers saw she was not Chinese, the company did not want to interview her. Additionally, all three women I interviewed told stories of being detained in airport security for hours on end because they were Uyghur. This caused them to miss their flights and ultimately miss their trips all together.

Inside the Camps. Reeducation camps, which are believed to have started around 2014 and then drastically expanded in 2017, have been one of the major ways the CCP limits cultural and religious expression in Xinjiang. Experts estimate that there are anywhere from several hundred to over 1,000 camps spread over Xinjiang and up to 2 million Uyghur in the camps at a time (Maizland). Despite large scale criticism, the Chinese government maintains that camps are being used to alleviate poverty and are voluntary (“Data Leaks”). Former detainees who have spoken out about what happens in the camps have reported being forced to pledge to the CCP,

renounce Islam, sing praise to Communism, and learn Mandarin. Many people have been tortured and recount being sleep deprived during long interrogations. Women have reported being sexually abused and even raped, then being forced to have abortions and having contraception forcefully implanted. Upon getting out of camps many Uyghur have contemplated suicide while some have even watched as friends and family took their own lives (Maizland). Children whose parents have been detained have been forced into state-run orphanages.

A series of leaked official documents in November 2019 explained exactly how one group of Uyghurs were being locked up, indoctrinated, and punished (“Data Leaks”). The documents explained that the Uyghur were told they could never escape, would be punished for behavioral violations, forced to fully transform, and that there would be surveillance cameras following everything they did. Additionally, students in the camps have a fixed bed position, seat in each classroom, and working area. According to the memo, detainees are awarded points based on ideological changes, study and training habits, and compliance with discipline. Detainees are only released when they have demonstrated changes in behavior, belief, and language. These changes must be observed by four different CCP committees in order to prompt release (“Data Leaks”).

A second set of leaked data outlines the information of at least 311 individuals and their relatives in China and abroad, and contains information on at least 2,000 of their relatives, neighbors, and friends (“China ‘war on terror’ Uproots”). The database not only includes information on individuals and the people around them, but also their neighborhood background and religious background. The database also outlines reasons for detention and if/when individuals will be released. Aljazeera further notes that the database has a large emphasis on religion over political violence and that most of the notes are on everyday activities such as

prayer, visiting a mosque, or growing a long beard (“China ‘war on terror’ Uproots”). These two data leaks are crucial in understanding what is happening and just how calculated and targeted the Chinese government’s repression of Uyghur cultural and religious identity is.

Forced Labor. During my interviews with the Uyghur women, subjects mentioned that Uyghur in the camps were being used for forced labor. At the time of the interviews there was little support to corroborate these statements. In early 2020, several studies have shown that this is in fact true. In January 2020, the Fair Labor Association (FLA) released a brief, saying that there was a strong possibility of forced labor. It states that this is hard to trace due to restricted access to suspected labor camps, unreliable information from Chinese officials, and lack of effective remediation services. FLA further noted that the goods most likely to be produced within the labor camps were cotton, yarn, and other textiles, stating that Xinjiang produces over 80% of China’s cotton.

In early March 2020, both the Associated Press (AP) and Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) published articles on forced labor involving the Uyghur both inside and outside of Xinjiang. According to ASPI, around 80,000 Uyghur have been transferred out of Xinjiang to twenty-seven factories in nine out of twenty-six of China’s provinces. These factories supply products for eighty-three of the world’s largest companies, including Apple, BMW, Gap, Huawei, Nike, Samsung, Sony, and Volkswagen. AP focuses on the Muslim Quarters of Nanchang, the capitol city of Jiangxi, a province on the east coast of China (Xinjiang is on the western side of the country). The factory in Nanchang is responsible primarily for the production of computer screens, cameras, and fingerprint scanners. The Uyghur in the factory are monitored via cameras and guards that stand at all entrances and exits to the building. When they are allowed to leave, it must be with a chaperone. They are not allowed to worship, and

women are forbidden to cover their heads. When called out on this, China continued to insist that these actions are part of an overarching poverty alleviation program.

A lot of the challenges between the Uyghur and the Han is the result of having two high power distance cultures (Hofstede 53). This means that both are dependent and hierarchical cultures where supervisors tend to be inaccessible and the ideal boss is seen as a father figure (“Country Comparison”). While they live in China, the Uyghur do not respect or follow majority Han customs the way the Communist party would like. Some Uyghur refuse to assimilate or follow Communist law. In fact, until recently, Xinjiang was self-governed and did not follow Beijing’s time zone (the whole country follows Beijing time). This shift from being self-governed to being governed by the Communist Party has not gone over well with the Uyghur, and some are resisting this power change. What is essentially happening is two high-power distance cultures characterized by central control are fighting over who gets control in Xinjiang.

The situation in Xinjiang has a long history that has been influenced by a growing global society. Both Muslim fundamentalists and far-right Westerners have pushed forward the notion that Islam is a violent religion, putting many lives at risk. The Chinese government has used this and the way other countries have reacted as justification to eliminate Uyghur culture by portraying Uyghur, and particularly religious Uyghur, as prone to Islamic fundamentalism. In his book, *Engaging Globalization*, Bryant L. Meyers states: “Without a theology of sin, globalization has no explanation for the greed, the hunger for power, hedonism, or selfish human choices” (210). The Chinese government has used globalization as an excuse to control Xinjiang in an attempt to destroy an entire ethnic group and the international community has yet to hold them accountable for their actions. This situation exposes many of the more harmful aspects of globalization.

III. Religion and Culture

While the Uyghur practice a variety of religions, they are primarily Muslim. According to a study done by Pew Research, there are approximately 1.8 billion Muslims worldwide and those numbers are quickly growing (Lipka). Daniel G. Groody describes Islam as "...global religion with a global mission that promotes globalization of ethical values" (127). Despite being a peaceful religion, a combination of general ignorance about the tenants of Muslim beliefs and violent attacks by a few Muslim fundamentalists have helped create a stereotype of terrorism and extremism associated with the religion. This creates a need for those who are not Muslim to seek to better understand the religion, take a deep look at misconceptions, and understand the cultures in which the religion is practiced.

Basics of Islam

Islam was founded by Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, when he went into a trance and heard voices in seventh century C.E. He originally thought the voices were evil spirits until his wife convinced him that they were angels. After he was convinced they were angels he announced that he was a prophet of Allah and began his work. The central aspect of Islam is the saying, "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammad is his messenger" ("Introduction to Islam"). Those who follow Islam share Judeo-Christian history that includes Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. These figures are all seen as messengers, with Mohammad being the final one. The Quran, which means "recitation" and "reading," provides the basic doctrine and core ethical guidelines for those who are Muslim.

At the core of Islam are the Five Pillars (Groody 128). The *shahada* is the Muslim profession of faith, as mentioned above: "there is no God but Allah, and Mohammad is his messenger." The *shahada* serves as a reminder that Islam is a monotheist religion ("Introduction

to Islam”). The *salah* are ritual prayers that occur five times daily. Muslims do not need to physically attend a mosque to participate in the prayers, but they should be facing Mecca (a destination of significance in modern-day Saudi Arabia). The *salah* is done by bowing several times first while standing, then when kneeling, then while touching the ground or a prayer mat. The *salah* serves as a symbol of reverence and submission to Allah (“Introduction to Islam”). The *saum* is the pillar of fasting. Fasting usually happens during Ramadan, the ninth month on the Islamic calendar, although there are exceptions made for those who are sick, elderly, and pregnant. Everybody else is expected to fast from dawn until dusk in observance of Ramadan. The *zakat* is the Muslim form of almsgiving. It is an obligatory tax on the wealthy to help the poor and sick (Groody 128). The final pillar, *haj*, is the pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. All Muslims are expected to make the journey at least once if they are physically and financially able (Groody 128).

Misconceptions of Islam

In order to ensure open collaboration between Muslims and non-Muslims, it is important to combat preconceptions that non-Muslims may have about Islam. Three common misconceptions are that Islam is a violent religion, that it oppresses women, and that it is primarily a recent import to the United States from the Middle East. This next section will break down each of these stereotypes, explain where they may come from, and why they are inaccurate. It will conclude with a discussion on the relationship between Christians and Muslims. There is a need to discuss misconceptions and stereotypes because it affects the way others are perceived and how non-Muslims act toward them. The Arbinger Institute explains approaching people as individuals with diverse and overlapping entities (viewing them from ‘out of the box’), rather than defining them by a single stereotype (keeping them ‘in the box’) means

they are seen as people. In order to do so, the ‘boxes’ (stereotypes) must be discussed and dismantled (36).

Islam is a violent religion. This stereotype is prominent today because of ISIS and other Muslim extremist terrorist groups, especially following the September 11 attacks in New York City. In the early years of Islam, while Mohammed was still teaching and seeking people to convert to the religion, if people refused to convert they were often attacked by Mohammad and his followers. This was a shift in Mohammad’s teaching from peace and compromise to power and conquest (Crane). However, according to Pew Research, most Muslims feel negatively about groups such as ISIS. The only exception was in Pakistan, where most participants surveyed said they did not know how they felt (Lipka). Muslims predominantly feel the same way as Western peoples about these types of hate groups: that they are extremists and harmful. To better understand this, it is important to note that there are two centers for Islam: Mecca and Medina. Mohammad was born in Mecca and began his work there. When Mohammad was in Mecca, where Muslims were in the minority, he preached peace and tolerance. When he was in Medina, and Muslims were in the majority, his message switched to power and forceful conversion (Crane 24). In fact, Meccan Muslims are often the target of Medina Muslims in Muslim majority countries. Many of these teachings are still discussed today, leading people to wrongfully believe that Islam is a violent religion.

In an interview with World Affairs, Farhana Khera, Executive Director of Muslim Advocates makes the point that fear sells (“Understanding Islam” 12:00). Stereotypes make it easier to tell simple stories of good against evil, and news centers use that fear to get more viewers, which in turn creates more fear. In the same interview, Karima Bennounce, a professor of International Law at University of California Davis, explains that Muslims experience hate

from multiple directions including from each other (“Understanding Islam” 37:45). Although peaceful practitioners of Islam vastly outnumber violent fundamentalists, narratives and facts about this truth are not widely presented, meaning that few violent incidents in the name of Islam characterize the whole religion, perpetuating these dangerous stereotypes.

Islam oppresses women. Many people believe that Islam oppresses women because of the denial of education to women by the Taliban and other extremist groups, or the wearing of a hijab (both forced and voluntary) by some Muslim women. Just like many women worldwide, Muslim women struggle with inequality and restrictive practices in education and the workplace. However, this is not a religious issue but a cultural one. The Quran calls for both men and women to dress modestly, just as it tells followers to educate both sons and daughters, and it gives both men and women the right to divorce in certain cases, and the right to refuse a spouse. Whether or not a woman wears a hijab is often cultural and many women wear the hijab by choice.

Muslims in the United States. Many people underestimate how long Muslims have been in the United States, instead portraying them as outsiders with beliefs hostile to American culture and values. A closer look at United States history reveals that this is deeply ahistorical. While it is unclear when the first Muslims arrived in the United States, an estimated ten to fifteen percent of slaves in America in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries were Muslim. Keeping their religious practices proved to be difficult, as many were forced to convert to Christianity. Between 1878 and 1924, Muslim immigrants came from Syria and Lebanon to the U.S. for economic opportunity. At the same time, the great migration of blacks to the north promoted a revival of African American Islam, something that is still alive today (“Islam in America”). In the 1950s, the United States opened its doors to immigrants, and Muslims came from Africa,

Asia and Latin America. Today, between four and seven million Americans follow Islam (“Islam in America”). While many people do not consider Muslims part of the mainstream culture in the United States (Lipka), Muslims have been in the United States for almost 400 years, making them an integral and long-standing part of the United States. They make up and contribute so much to the culture.

Relationship with Christians. While the way Muslims are viewed by the general public in the United States does seem to have improved over the past few years, studies have shown that in general Republicans did not see Muslims positively in comparison to their Democratic counterparts (Lipka). This is unfortunate considering that Muslims face not only an unfair amount of discrimination, but also a lot of unfair media attention. What makes this even more unfortunate is that Chinese President Xi Jinping is using the event of September 11 as a crutch to justify cultural genocide against the Uyghur. American Christians need to what power they hold when influencing other countries such as China. Christians should ease their prejudices of Muslims because that plays a role in the justification of how Muslim groups are treated internationally.

During interviews, one of things I asked ministers and preachers was how their congregations would react if they brought forward the notion of supporting another religious group that was being oppressed. Pastor Kevin Kopsa, a Lutheran pastor outside of Portland, Oregon explained that he was sure some people would be strongly in favor, some would moderately support such action, and some would strongly feel against the notion of helping other oppressed groups. Reverend Doctor Char Hoffmann, a United Methodist pastor just outside Chicago, explained that the Methodist church does allow for policies and practices that ensure the rights of every religious group. She supports the policies on religious freedoms and is active

in her community on these issues, but she did admit that while a significant group within her congregation would support advocating for other religions, there would be just as many who were against the notion. Churches, as a whole, have a long way to go in seeking to help people in need regardless of religion.

As previously discussed, stereotypes Christians have of Muslims, it is equally important to discuss some of the things Muslims think about Christians. This allows Christians to rethink their preconceptions and become more open to a broader world view. One of the first things they need to keep in mind is that according to the perception of many people all over the world, Muslims included, being American immediately means someone is Christian (“Questions Muslims Ask”). Americans and American Christians alike know this is not the case. Knowing about these misconceptions makes it easier to see how many Muslims view Americans, and thus Christians, as violent. Many Muslims will point to examples such as the Crusades, colonialism, and in today’s world, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (“Questions Muslims Ask”). This, when combined with the United States’ lenient laws on gun control, makes it even easier to see how Christianity can be viewed as violent. The more important point is that investigating and dismantling the stereotypes held by the general population creates a better platform for discussion.

Whether or not an individual is religious, simply respecting another religion and looking for some way to connect with them is essential. In her book, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, Ann Fadiman shares the story of Lia Lee and her family. The Lees are Hmong, a people group originally from Laos who follow a Shamanistic belief system. In Western medical terms, Lia had epilepsy. In the traditional Hmong Shamanistic system, her soul, or her *dab*, had left her and needed to be found. To do this, her family and their community sacrificed animals in

order to bring her *dab* back. On the other hand, Lia's doctors and social services felt as though the Lees were non-compliant and Lia was temporarily placed in California's foster care system. Many people who have heard and studied the Lees' story cannot help but wonder if what was actually happening was a result of cultural differences. Perhaps if western doctors had taken more time to understand the Shamanistic views of the Hmong, Lia may not have eventually ended up in a vegetative state for the remainder of her life. The same can be said about how people view and understand those with any different belief system. It is not fair to comment or look down upon another group without a basic understanding of why they believe what they believe. The Lees were doing what their culture and religious belief told them in an attempt to protect the health of their child. This makes just attempting to understand people who are culturally different an essential act in order to work for a shared goal.

It is important to look past held stereotypes of people groups in which very little is known. Looking past misconceptions and looking for truth is one way in which Christians can seek to build positive relationships with Muslims. Americans have a tendency to think they are always right. In reality, they are not and as mentioned earlier, have so much power and influence on how opinions are formed on a global level. It is my hope that more Christians will look past their own preconceived opinions about other religions so that relationships can be built and a sense of community can take hold.

It is unfortunate how a globalized world creates more opportunities for cultural miscommunications to take place due to stereotypes and misconceptions. As seen in *The Spirit Catches You*, language barriers can prove a challenge to advancing shared goals of protecting the health and safety of individuals. The Lees' did not speak English and rather than finding effective ways to communicate, Lia was temporarily taken from her parents. Similarly, in

relationships between Christians and Muslims, they too do not speak the same ‘language’ due to being bound to social contracts that look down on the other. As globalization increasingly brings people of different cultures and religions into contact, it is important to look at cultures as a guide to communication. Rather than seeing Islam as a violent religion, it would be more productive if seen as a diverse, peaceful religion that includes groups such as the Uyghur who have a forgiveness meshrep and invite strangers into their homes and treats their guests as equals, regardless of religion. As mentioned earlier, many countries follow in the United States lead about attitudes towards Islam. It is for that reason that Americans must set a better example of what happens when religious diversity is widely accepted by taking a more active approach. In the end, this mindset will serve as a reminder that, “humans flourish when their relationships are peaceful and just” (Meyers, *Engaging Globalization* 22). It is for the purpose of a safer society that culture and religion must be of utmost importance when working in the context of minority groups.

IV. Christian Theology

The cultural genocide happening against the Uyghur is inexcusable. The challenge is, there is not much the Western world can do that will directly impact the Uyghurs still living in Xinjiang. However, using the basic theology behind Christianity, Christians can utilize hospitality, love, and service in order to promote peace between Christians and Muslims, dismantling the fear and stereotypes that are used to justify such treatment and creating a shared community for advocacy.

One of the things Christians and churches alike neglect to acknowledge is that what is happening in Xinjiang to the Uyghur has not only religious dimensions, but also cultural dimensions. They are being targeted in part because they are Muslim, but also due to their

refusal to assimilate to traditional Han culture. According to Reverend Doctor Char Hoffman: “When it comes to religion, race, ethnicity, anything that separates us, oppresses us, when one hurts, we all hurt. In the eyes of God, God is diminished when we diminish each other.” We were created to love what God loves, and He loves what He has created. Religion should not be used as an excuse to not care for somebody who is going through trauma. The Uyghur need as many people as possible to love and advocate for them.

Hospitality

A key concept in both Christian and Islamic faith is that of hospitality. Marjorie J. Thompson defines hospitality as “...receiving the other, from the heart, into my own dwelling place. It entails providing for the need, comfort, and delight of the other with all the openness, respect, freedom, tenderness, and joy that love itself embodies” (133). Hospitality allows Christians to see the other as equal, just as deserving of love and embrace as the in-group. During my interviews this summer, a defining characteristic of all three Uyghur women I talked to was hospitality. The two older women invited me to their homes and we either had tea or a meal together. They had a way of making their home a place of welcome. It makes sense that one of the things each woman wanted me to understand about Uyghur culture was their strong belief in hospitality.

Hospitality is also a very important aspect of Christianity. This can be seen in the way Jesus treated those who would be considered ‘the other.’ Richard Beck argues that, “...hospitality, the welcoming of strangers, is the quintessential Christian practice. Welcoming sinners to the table fellowship was a central, distinctive, and perhaps most inflammatory aspect of Jesus’ ministry and teaching” (121). Christians are supposed to follow in Jesus’ footsteps and

do as he taught. This means welcoming those who are different, forming friendships, developing empathy, and giving the other a place to belong.

Love

The most common theme of the Christian Bible is that of love. The overarching story of the Bible is that God sent Jesus to die in order to save the earth from sin. This was done out of love. Christians are told to love their family, friends, enemies, and anything else God loves. It is important that because God loves everyone, so should Christians. 1 John 3:16-18 says:

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth (NIV).

This verse demonstrates the importance of both love and service and the need for Christians to practice both. Christians have been shown unconditional love and therefore must show love to others. Despite all of this, it seems as though loving those who are different is one of the things Christians often find the most difficult. However, the example Jesus has given time and time again is to love those who are different.

Christians who love others must also want what is best for them. Ultimately, the Uyghur crisis is a product of systemic injustice, and striving for justice on their behalf requires Christians to love the Uyghur. Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda states, “love implies active commitment to the well-being of whom or what is loved. Where people suffer under systematic injustice, seeking their well-being entails seeking to undo that injustice” (57). Richard Beck echoes this when he notes, “If you want justice without injustice, you must want love. A world of perfect justice is a world

of love” (223). It should also be noted that the Uyghur are not an enemy of Christians, they are people who need to be shown love because they are in an impossible situation. They need to be loved and supported and Christians must be willing to take a stand. With both Christians and Muslim groups victimized by violence worldwide, and both having the same foundations of love and peace, it just makes sense that the groups should support each other.

Service

In my experience, many people believe that it is good works that make individuals good Christians. There is more to a Christian act than a simple act of goodness. Christian service is not just about good works, it is also about the heart. Genuine service must come from the heart. In a letter to the Ephesian elders, Paul says, “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35, NIV). There is an important lesson in these verses: serving others makes people feel good. When Christians serve others, they give a piece of themselves to other people and ask for nothing in return. With this approach, they need to look for ways to advocate for the Uyghur and welcome them into their lives without expecting anything in return. Christians need to serve the Uyghur, because they are at their weakest point and that is what they need most.

When serving the other, Christians must remember to not only act from the heart but also to use whatever strength they have. 1 Peter 4:10 says, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms” (NIV). There are so many ways in which Christians can serve the Uyghur. The most basic form of service to the Uyghur is to simply seek to understand the situation they are in. It is a complicated and messy situation, and they need people who are willing to try to understand. The second form

of service is to become an ally, or somebody who understands what is happening and has found it in themselves to actually do something. Another way to serve the Uyghur is to become a friend, somebody who can be relied on for help and guidance when things are hard. In the end, the most important thing is to do something rather than sitting by and waiting for somebody else to do something. A good way to start is by examining personal strengths and finding a way that those strengths can be used for good for the Uyghur. Ways Christians can serve the Uyghur will be discussed later.

The Other

One thing that became abundantly clear during my interviews with church leaders was that views of ‘the other,’ or people who are seen as different from the majority, was that leaders were more flexible in their willingness to interact with the ‘the other’ than they felt like their congregation as a whole would be. Christians need to reconsider the way ‘the other’ is viewed and the ways in which ‘the other’ is rejected or accepted. Exclusion refers to the way a society, a religious body, and individuals push away people who are seen as ‘the other.’ Embrace refers to the way society views and learns to accept those who are different from the majority. When ‘the other’ is accepted, it is easier to discover a new way of seeing things that makes room for embrace of people who are different.

Exclusion of the Other. Individuals learn fairly early in life who is part of the in-group and who is in the out-group. This is not usually explicitly taught, but something that is noticed. It can be noticed who spends time with who, who is the same as everybody else, and who is different. Sometimes ‘the other’ inadvertently pushes away those who are part of the in-group. As religious bodies, there is this tendency to push away and even fear other religions, claiming that if other religions are understood, personal spirituality is disowned. In the United

States, failure to understand Islam and its practices leads to Muslims being seen as terrorists. In his book, *Unclean*, Richard Beck describes how ‘the other’ is cast as a monster, stating, “...sociomoral disgust is used to demonize and scapegoat populations, creating ‘monsters’ who are threatening to society” (92). Society creates the very thing they are afraid of when they demonize those viewed as the other. Society must embrace ‘the other’ so that there is mutual understanding. Not only are the Uyghur of a different religion, but also a different culture - even in the country they call home. When people do not understand why somebody does something, options are to either ask questions or misunderstand or ignore new people. Unfortunately, the Uyghur are all too often ignored, and society misses out on learning about this beautiful culture.

Another way ‘the other’ is excluded is through infrahumanization, or when people see another group as being less human. Richard Beck explains that, “infrahumanization occurs when one group of people comes to believe that another group of people does not possess the same vital and defining human quality such as intellect or certain human sensibilities” (102). This is exactly what has been happening to the Uyghur in China. They are seen as less than human. It is also possible to see the ways in which Christians and the United States infrahumanize Muslims through long-held stereotypes. So many people in society see Muslims as less human, because they are different from the majority and therefore, they must be punished. A change in mindset becomes crucial.

Embracing the Other. When somebody from an out-group is embraced, the in-group becomes open to a whole different perspective and follows the example they have been given by Jesus. Volf states: “For the self-shaped by the cross of Christ and the life of the triune God, however, embrace includes not just the other who is a friend but also the other who is an enemy” (146). What Volf insinuates here is that even when people are not seen as the enemy, it is

possible to become friends. It is possible that an enemy becomes a friend through learning to embrace

These themes of hospitality, love, service, and treatment of others not only apply to Christians, but Muslims as well. As Pastor Hoffman states:

While we have significant differences in the person of Jesus and the prophet Mohammad, the truth contained within the Bible and Qur'an, the place and remedy of sin, differences which will not go away until the end of times, we are all called to love God and love others with all ourselves, all of what we are, and all of what we have.

The concept of love and how it effects our attitudes about service, hospitality, and treatment of the other are so central to both religions. They are things Christians need to hold onto when seeking relationships not only with those who are a part of the in-groups but especially as they seek relationships with 'the other.' While it is inevitable that there are concepts the two groups will never agree on, the ones that should be used as leverage to form relationships.

One of the dangers of globalization is that it affects the most vulnerable. As just discussed, Christians are well positioned to reach out and help marginalized groups, especially through hospitality, love, and service. Christians would do well to remember that: "from a Christian perspective, whenever a community ceases to care for the most vulnerable members of society, its spiritual integrity falls apart" (Groody 34). The 'most vulnerable' are not limited to the poor in communities- it can also mean minority people who would be included in the general out-group. This can mean those who are new in the area and are searching for community, or those from a different culture or religion, regardless of how long they have been there, who are still searching for a place to belong. These are areas where Christians can turn globalization onto a positive thing by using theology of hospitality, love, and service that have just been discussed.

V. Reconciliation

Conflict and the need for reconciliation can come from a number of different places. It could be the need to reconcile something from within, with a friend, or finding a way for two groups to learn to see each other in a new light. As discussed earlier, the conflict between Christians and Muslims has a long history. Many American Christians today probably have not been through what the Uyghur have, but we can still empathize with them. As Emmanuel Katongle and Chris Rice point out: “Though not all of us have experienced the large-scale trauma of war or the violence of brutal racism, we all know brokenness and division at some level, whether through divorce, abuse, social injustice, conflict in our community or right inside our own family” (23). We all know what conflict is, therefore, we need to know how to work for reconciliation.

What is reconciliation?

John Paul Lederach explains that reconciliation is a journey, encounter, and place. We have to go through this journey toward and eventually through conflict. Religious reconciliation starts within us, when we start to question our previous conceptions of other religions and look for ways to change these preconceptions. The whole process is a journey. We look for ways to interact with the other through trying to understand, meeting with them, and asking them questions.

Reconciliation is a decision that must be made, and for many Christians involved in interfaith relationships, this is largely internal as we can anticipate a lack of external support. The following discussion on Brenda Salter-McNeil’s roadmap to reconciliation offers a way that makes the process feel less isolating and outlines a way to build up camaraderie.

Roadmap to Reconciliation

When Christians discuss reconciliation it is often targeted towards interpersonal reconciliation or reconciliation with individuals or groups that could be converted to Christianity. There is a lack of guidance of how to reconcile with those who are different, especially of different religions, for the purpose of relationships. In her book, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, Brenda Salter-McNeil offers a potential way to work towards reconciliation that Christians and churches alike could use to reconcile with Muslims. The first step is a catalytic event, something that pushes us out of our own comfort zone and into a new way of thinking about an issue. The catalytic event leads to the realization phase, where those who have experienced a catalytic event come to terms with their new worldview. The third step is identification, in which those who are considering reconciliation begin to identify with others who are also considering reconciliation and want to become involved. After the identification phase is the preparation phase. This is the phase that is all about preparing for the act of reconciliation. The final phase is the activation phase. The activation phase of reconciliation is where change actually occurs. This next section will explore how these five phases can be applied to relationships between Christians and Muslims.

Step 1: Catalytic Event. In order for reconciliation to happen, there must be a catalytic event. Salter-McNeil explains this as: “We need someone or something to push us out of our comfort zones and the isolated social enclaves that keep us alienated from other people and their differing perspectives” (42). When I first started thinking about my topic for this thesis I knew I wanted to do something with a basis in people in conflict and had recently started following the Uyghur issue. I was amazed that I could have lived in China for three years and never have heard about this group of people. I was further drawn to this because of all the hate I had been

noticing by Christians towards Muslims, and I knew I needed to explore this more. While I personally have never hated those who practice Islam, I was not paying attention to the issues as well as I should have until I heard about the Uyghur and started actually considering the overarching challenges.

Step 2: Realization Phase. The realization phase is where people have become so aware of their new truth and outlook that they feel required to respond (57). There are three essential tasks to this phase: reorientation, readiness, and restoration. Reorientation is where people realize they have been wrong about something. For example, someone might confront their stereotype that all Muslims are violent or that the religion is unfair to women. Once they have reoriented themselves to knowing that their initial adversarial worldview is false, they are ready for reconciliation to evolve. This means becoming ready for change, seeing the benefits of change, and finding ways to actually change. Finally, in the restoration, people involved find things to do. Christians interested in interfaith relationships and the reconciliation of Christians and Muslims can start by praying, having open discussions about what they are thinking and feeling, posting on social media, and finding ways to become more involved in their communities through interfaith meetings or community events. The realization phase is all about finding ways to respond that make sense to the individual seeking to reconcile.

Step 3: Identification Phase. This is the phase where people discover others who think like them, resulting in a shift of collective cultural identity. Salter-McNeil explains, “we begin to identify with and relate to other people who are experiencing the same thing. It’s where we begin the journey of seeing ourselves as kingdom people and potential reconcilers” (66). This thesis addresses these issues in the form of examining stereotypes. When reconcilers look at why they believe one thing or another about a group and see how stereotypes cannot be trusted,

they also see the human in the other and I identify. Once they have connected with somebody else, and recognized their humanity, it comes easier to identify with others and thus begin to build a relationship.

Step 4: Preparation Phase. The fourth phase is all about preparing for change in a way that is not based on reaction but allows for transformation (83). This is where previous beliefs have changed and there is a strong need to do things differently. This phase allows those involved to examine the old ways of doing things and find new ways of doing them that are better for more people. For example, people come to the realization that the relationship between Christians and Muslims needs to change in order to create a more supportive society. There must be a level of transformation in this new idea that gives groups the desire to actually do something differently than it had previously been done.

Step 5: Activation Phase. The fifth and final step in Salter McNeil's Roadmap to reconciliation is activation. This is where people actually become involved in the reconciliation process. To act as a guide, Salter-McNeil offers the acronym Communicate, Advocate, Relate, Educate, or C.A.R.E. Communication is key in any relationship, and it is no different in reconciliation-based relationships. Reconcilers need to communicate what they have learned about a social justice issue, in this case, the oppression of the Uyghur by the Chinese government. One way to do this is to listen to stories. Listening to stories creates empathy, solidarity, and compassion. One of the wonderful things about the Uyghur is that many are willing to share their stories with those who will listen and are given the space to feel safe to do so. Listening to the stories of Aruz, Nura, and Rabiah was enlightening and distressing but it helped me understand what they had been through and what they are hoping to achieve in their willingness to share.

Advocating for the Uyghur is one of the few things people can do to show they care. In Xinjiang, there is not much that can happen, especially with the government monitoring every move the Uyghur make. This makes advocacy and collaboration with the Uyghur diaspora crucial. Americans can advocate for Uyghur by calling Senators and asking them not to promote bills that would harm the Uyghur.

When a way to relate to other people is found, it becomes possible to understand others better and build stronger relationships. Additionally, once individuals have had a catalytic moment and met people with similar feelings, they need to connect to or create communities focused on reconciliation. This is demonstrated in the work of the Capitol Area New Mainers Project and in the story of the Imam and the Pastor, two stories on the importance of reconciliation that will be discussed later. In both cases people discovered a flaw in the ordinary way of doing things and reconciliation was brought about when both sides played active roles in the reconciliation process.

The final aspect of C.A.R.E is “Educate.” This means that those who are going through the reconciliation process need to remain educated on the social issues they care about. With social justice issues such as the oppression of Uyghur and many others, international and local policies are constantly changing. This does not necessarily mean that a record of all social justice issues is kept, as that would be impossible. Choose one or two and maintain some form of relationship with the issue. The information the world has about the challenges the Uyghur are facing changes almost daily, making it more important for those who care to remain updated on the situation.

In the church, reconciliation must work its way up to being a group effort. Globalization demonstrates that collective efforts must be made or else there is the potential for dangerous

consequences. Rick Love uses his framework of a peacemaking continuum to express how the church, as a collective, can become more involved in the reconciliation process and promoting health globalization. He explains that the five points of the continuum are peace with God, peace with ourselves, peace with the church, peace with neighbors, and peace with enemies. In order for the church to be part of reconciliation it must be engaging all five points at the same time. This is impossible for one person to make collective efforts mandatory. Globalization can make or break reconciliation processes, by opening doors to peace that had been previous closed due to lack of knowledge. Now that globalization has brought knowledge of more cultures, it brings with it the need for reconciliation.

VI. Interfaith Relationships

Interfaith relationships act as a gateway to understanding those who are different from yourself and should not be used as a way to convert somebody to Christianity. Eboo Patel describes interfaith leadership as: “people who cause other people to change their attitudes and actions with respect to religious diversity” (13). When importance of religious diversity is understood, it becomes easier to further engage in interfaith relationships. These are relationships that are informed by seeking to spend time and know people of a different belief system. As Kendra Brock, a former missionary to China points out: “one would hope that in interfaith relationships for the purpose of peace, you would develop a genuine interest in the well-being of the other person.” This is the point of interfaith relationships. They allow you to learn from each other. In his article “Intergroup Contact Theory,” Jim C. Everett discusses Gordon Allport’s intergroup contact hypothesis. This hypothesis theorizes that positive intergroup interactions occur when there is equal status, intergroup cooperation, common goals, and support from social and institutional authorities. Additionally, Everett discusses that,

“positive contact has been shown to reduce self-reported prejudice.” This is the point of interfaith relationships: to grow, learn from, and support each other.

Miroslav Volf makes a great point that: “Peace between religions would do little to create peace between peoples unless, of course, one understands peace between religions as peace between the people who espouse them” (285). It is simpler to accept another religion when individuals from that belief system are known. Getting to know individuals helps promote empathy and solidarity with them, thus leading us to take more action on their behalf than previously done.

Tips for Building Relationships

One of the greatest challenges many individuals face in building relationships with those from other cultures and religions is that they do not want to take the first step. Fear of being rejected by the in-group gets the better of them and ultimately they decide not to engage. As argued above, Christians need to be more proactive in building these types of relationships. Another significant obstacle many Christians face is not knowing how to interact with those who are different. Christians have adjusted to their own in-groups, making people insecure in interacting with out-groups. Here is the thing: people such as the Uyghur in the United States need to know that they are loved, wanted, and supported. They have been repressed in their own country, and in the minority in their new country. As a collectivist culture that values community and family, forming relationships with the Uyghur is crucial. Lack of communication with their own families makes the Uyghur situation even more complicated as family is integral to the identity of most individuals. They are in an impossible situation where they cannot even contact many of their family members still residing in Xinjiang. This is a struggle all three women discussed; they have little information about what their family is

experiencing. Helping to create a community for the Uyghur through building relationships is crucial to their success in the United States.

It seems so easy to see new groups here in the United States and hold onto the notion that if they are going to live here, they must become like us. I would like to challenge this mindset. Rather than forcing American culture upon others, maybe Americans should develop the view that they are already adjusting to so much and need space to be in their culture. Rather than pushing their culture away, Americans should embrace and seek to understand the new culture. In her book, *Across the Street and Around the World*, Jeannie Marie offers some great advice for engaging with the other.

Entering into a New Culture. As Jeanie Marie begins her discussion, the first thing she addresses is the importance of being intentional about the time and energy invested in this new culture. This gives both parties a feeling of togetherness and community that is so important. When I did my interviews, I knew I had to be intentional. I wanted the women I was interviewing to know that I genuinely wanted to know them. To do this, I made sure to block out other distractions and paid attention only to them. I did not want anybody to feel as though I had wasted their time. The second tip is to make time for unplanned time. There is nothing wrong with making plans to simply spend time together and enjoy each other's company. This is when some of the best connections are made. Be sure to take the pressure off and let the time flow naturally. One afternoon several weeks after our initial interview, Aruz invited me her house just to spend time together. Initially, I wanted to turn her down because I had a lot going on and was in the middle of a project for work. I told myself to go. We had a wonderful time that was so much more relaxed because we already knew each other, allowing us to have different types of conversations other than what is happening to her people. The third is to eat together. In many

cultures, food connects people. The Uyghur are the same way. They love sharing their food culture and welcome questions about it openly. Food is a cultural artifact that attracts people to various culture groups and provides an opportunity to connect with somebody different. After my interview with Rabiah, she invited me to stay for lunch. She had warmed up leftovers from the night before consisting of rice mixed with vegetables, chicken, and a traditional bread. It was a cultural lesson that I would not have had had I not understood the importance of other cultures and their food. The fourth habit is to cultivate extreme hospitality. As mentioned earlier, hospitality is important in both Christian and Islamic faith practices. This concept of hospitality should be used as a unifying factor. Both religions believe in welcoming other people and as Christians, we should be more willing to be hospitable to those who are different from us. When I went to interview Rabiah, she was not home when I arrived. One of her sons let me in and asked me to sit down in a small living room just to the right of the entryway. This demonstrated the hospitality of the Uyghur and made for a more relaxing interview because I knew I was welcome in the house. The fifth is to go with the flow. Various cultures have different ways of doing things that may seem strange and foreign. Going with the flow allows people to appreciate what is happening and actually learn from spending time being absorbed in something else. The final habit is to honor everyone and not to shame anybody. Shaming others is not the job of the guest and it can create unnecessary tension. When unnecessary tension is created, it can damage a new relationship, even when done on accident. This makes it especially important to keep negative comments quiet.

Relationships with a New Culture. According to Marie, when exposed to a new cultural situation, act like a dummy (23). Go into all situations assuming you know nothing and engage by asking questions, whether or not you know the answer. This may seem redundant, but it

shows that you do not know it all and actually want them to explain their culture. If you go into a Uyghur home, you may see instruments or foods that are unfamiliar, and it is okay to ask about them. The Uyghur have many interesting cultural artifacts, as do many other cultures outside of the United States. The second piece of advice she gives is to ask how the host culture would do it. If the guest just does something, it may be seen as offensive to the host culture. Additionally, there is no telling what a guest can learn when they are the follower rather than the leader. For example, if you go to sit down at the table, wait for them to tell you where to sit. There may be a specific order or pattern they follow. The third tip she gives is to not be the first or the last. These could be important roles to the host culture. If a guest is first, they probably will not know exactly what to do and even if they do, it is always better to let the host culture go first and act as an example. The final piece of advice she gives is this: if it is not a sin, do it. For example, if visiting a mosque, it is okay to pray if it does not go against personal religious beliefs. If they are doing something that does not go against the guest's religion, doing the activity shows appreciation and solidarity.

Interfaith Leadership

Those involved in interfaith relationships listen to a calling that many would simply ignore. These are the people who are mobilizers who are not afraid to see and imagine things differently than they currently are. They have let go of their preconceived notions of what should be done and have found a way to internalize what they have learned in order to be effective leaders. Interfaith leaders know the importance of collective leadership and understand that they cannot change the hearts of people without help and support. Finally, they believe in what they are trying to accomplish and stand firm in their position on interfaith relationships.

To better understand the role of interfaith leaders, they can be compared to social entrepreneurs. Although not the same thing, they do share many characteristics. They are the types of people that see a problem and pull resources together to face the challenge head on. One of the key ways these two roles resemble each other is that they both “intentionally cultivate relationships with people across political camps and from a variety of backgrounds so they can better understand how to navigate change” (Bornstein and Davis 29). Both positions clearly see the challenges in front of them and help encourage change. Interfaith leaders envision a world where religion is not a reason to be divided, but a reason to come together and learn from each other. Social entrepreneurs may tackle a larger range of challenges, but they too see the way things could be and look for ways to achieve this better future. The two main unifying characteristics of these two positions are being innovative and human-centered. Brothers David and Tom Kelley state: “A creative mindset can be a powerful force for looking beyond the status quo.” (18). Both roles are important for creating a safer and more sustainable community.

Leaders in interfaith relationships do not need to be those who are outspoken or would traditionally be seen as leaders. They are those who see a problem in the status quo and exemplify ways the problem can be challenged. It is one thing to give an impassioned speech about why Christians are in the wrong for the way they have treated Muslims in the past and it is quite another to go to a mosque in order to ask questions or attend a community event that welcomes new neighbors into their new communities. Such actions that allow those individuals to lead by example, an equally as important area of leadership as speaking in front of a crowd. It is best to take personal leadership style and apply it into the context of interfaith leadership. Interfaith leadership comes down to who has the heart to make change in the way religions interact with each other.

Action Takers. Those who are leaders in interfaith relationships are action takers who inspire those around them to become action takers as well. They see a problem and actually do something about the issue, rather than allowing somebody else to come by and do it for them. Simon Sinek believes that “people don’t buy what you do; they buy why you do it” (“How Great Leaders” 4:15). He further points out that “if you talk about what you believe, you will attract people who believe what you believe” (“How Great Leaders” 10:30). In the case of interfaith relationships, leaders must be those who see that many of the challenges Christians and Muslims face are similar and that working together would create a larger community for both groups. Christian action takers are those who visit mosques to understand Islam, visit Muslim-owned restaurants and engage with the staff, or take the time to actually call senators to encourage laws that maintain religious freedom because they believe in what they are doing.

Mobilizers. Mobilizers see the potential in other people and their communities to be better. Jeannie Marie defines a mobilizer as: “one who desires to see other people inspired, recruited, trained, and released into an important calling” (136). The role of a mobilizer is not easy. Many people are stuck in their ways and would much prefer not to challenge the status quo. Mobilizers for interfaith action face the added challenge of many Christians believing they should only support other Christian groups. The role of the mobilizer is to offer their churches and larger communities an outlet to become inspired to the point where they too want to do something. Mobilizers have learned to look past their own preconceived notions of the way things should be to a better world; then, they make that happen in their communities. The Uyghur need the voices of the mobilizers to help change the hearts of those who do not think Christians should support them because of a difference in religion. They need mobilizers to inspire others.

Empathetic. Those who are empathetic can feel and sense what others around them are going through. They identify with the heart of the issue and care deeply for others. When explaining the importance of empathy in leadership positions, Petra Kuenkel notes: “The entry point for the trust-based co-creation strategy is humanity: mindfulness of difference and dynamics, balance between task and human encounter, empathy for the story that exists behind each person” (166). One of the key advantages of empathetic leadership is that they see how all the pieces fit together and understand the importance of multiple backgrounds coming together to create sustainable change. Co-creation allows individuals and groups alike more room to have their voices heard. People who are empathetic want to hear the story behind the person and actively seek opportunities to learn more about them. Many Uyghur have heart-breaking stories of having to leave their families, being detained in airports, not being able to find jobs, loved ones who have been trafficked for a variety of reasons, or simply not knowing what is going on with their families. Empathy for the Uyghur can be fostered by listening to stories or trying to see the world as they see it. This allows individuals to attempt to share in the narrative of what is happening to the Uyghur. Sharing in the narrative allows others to become part of the story, and in this case, hopefully part of the solution.

Collective Leaders. One of the most important things interfaith leaders must understand is the importance of collective leadership. Petra Kuenkel explains that collective leadership, “...requires us to go beyond the individual and build the capacity of groups and systems to move important issues of common concern forward. This requires collective action, dialogue, and collaboration” (29). Interfaith leaders must take a collective leadership approach because they are working across religious and cultural lines. As Christians who are looking to support oppressed groups, such as the Uyghur, there needs to be a level of understanding of how these

groups and the larger Muslim population are already involved in finding a solution to the oppression of the Uyghur. To make actual, sustainable change in the way Christians and Muslims view each other, there need to be leaders who bring in different perspectives, have different life experiences and come from both faith backgrounds.

Have Personal Faith. Finally, interfaith leaders must know why their own faith is important as well as the faith of other people. Reverend Doctor Char Hoffmann argues that “Christian leaders should seek to educate themselves and those in their care as to the basic tenets of faith of marginalized persons.” Interfaith leaders also know why they need to understand other faiths. Understanding faiths outside of Christianity helps Christians reaffirm their own faith. Knowing what their own foundation is allows leaders to actively listen to those from other religious belief systems. This makes for more engaging conversations that challenge and enrich those involved, especially while seeking to better understand those with a different faith tradition.

Create Safety. According to Simon Sinek, good leaders have a way of making those whom they are leading feel safe and secure. In explaining why creating safety he notes:

If the conditions are wrong, we are forced to expend our own time and energy to protect ourselves from each other, and that inherently weakens the organization. When we feel safe inside the organization, we will naturally combine our talents and our strengths and work tirelessly to face the dangers outside and seize the opportunities (“Why Good Leaders” 5:55).

This is especially important for interfaith leaders, who create these secure environments by making the choice to look out for others. They look out for the team and those who are working with them. One way good leaders protect their team is by taking risks before anybody else does.

The possibility of widespread relationships between Christians and Muslims seems so far away and oftentimes hopeless. There is risk involved, whether it is being pushed away from home congregations, families, or meeting opposition left and right. Leaders take risks first to show that in reality, it is worth the risk if it means relationships and understanding are given the room to thrive. The final reason Sinek believes leaders make people feel safe and secure is that they put their blood, sweat, and tears into their projects, which demonstrates a level of commitment and trust that allows others to do the same thing.

Examples

According to Catherine Cornell, there are five steps to constructive interreligious dialogue. They are humility, commitment to a particular religion, recognition of interconnection, empathy, and hospitality (Duderjia). The following stories exemplify these characteristics by demonstrating the importance of interfaith partnerships and how trust “can only be nurtured and inspired by a healthy community between those who feel bound by social contract” (Friedman 392). When prejudices based on religion are set aside and the humanity of the other is empathized, the person can be seen. When each person is seen in their own situation and as a part of the larger community, conversations can start happening. This allows for projects such as interfaith coalitions to make actual change in communities by opening doors for people to understand people from other religious backgrounds.

Capitol Area New Mainers Project. During my research, I had the privilege to interview Chris, one of the co-founders of the Capitol Area New Mainers Project (CANMP). He explained that just after the 2016 United States Presidential Election, there was a lot of fear and hate spreading throughout the country, especially towards Muslims. It was after leaders of various faiths and denominations started connecting and asking each other, “how can things change?”,

the Capital Area New Mainers Project was born. The Project was started because a Jewish leader and Christian leader wanted to come together to help their Muslim neighbors adjust into what had been an almost exclusively white community. Since 2013-2014, the Muslim population has been growing in Maine, as more and more immigrants and refugees decide to move to the area. After the election, the leaders of CANMP took the fear and anger in the community and turned it into something positive by creating a support system for these new residents. To sustain this, CANMP runs on three basic principles: connecting people, getting to know and respect each other, and sharing experiences. These principles are put into practice in the form of mentor families, where three or four American families help one new Maine family adjust. CANMP celebrates holidays and holds potluck dinners as a way for people to get to know each other. The Project looks past the religion and to the heart of the humans who are looking for a place to belong while they adjust to a new city, a new language, and a new culture.

The Pastor and the Imam. The second example is that of the Pastor and the Imam in Nigeria. Up until the last quarter of the 20st century, Muslims and Christians in Nigeria lived in peace. Then economic decline, religious extremism, and political turmoil hit the country, leaving these two groups of equal size turning on each other. Pastor James Wuye was part of Christian extremist group and Imam Mohammad Ashafa was part of a Muslim militia. After a mutual friend convinced them to meet each other and challenged them to work through their differences, the two men began to understand each other. It was then that Pastor Wuye's mother fell ill. Hearing this news, Imam Mohammad came to visit them in the hospital. The relationship was fragile in the beginning, with Pastor James admitting part of him wanted to kill Imam Mohammad when they first started working together. However, through getting to know and

understand each other and realizing the value in each other, these two men were able to come together and create the Christian-Muslim Interfaith Mediation Center.

Interfaith Coalitions. Another way to promote interfaith dialogue is through interfaith coalitions. Interfaith religious coalitions are defined as, “religiously diverse groups of activists (working) together in sustained ways to solve problems facing their neighborhoods, country, and world” (Braunstein and Yukick). In the same article, Braunstein and Yukick explain that interfaith coalitions allow members to begin to do things differently by using themes of intentionality, creativity, language, and mixing religious symbols for the sake of understanding the other. It should be noted that many people are uncomfortable with aspects of interfaith coalitions and that those who participate are sometimes socially rejected from their home congregations. Thus, those that do choose to participate should do so when they feel strong and confident in their own faith in order to have discussions with people from their own faith and those practicing other faiths in a productive manner.

As discussed earlier, due to globalization, Muslims face negativity because of the way Muslim fundamentalists are made a focus in mainstream media. After discussing that there are Muslims who are standing up against fundamentalism, Karima Bennouna explains that there are not enough Muslims speaking out against the actions of fundamentalists and the ones that do not receive as much attention. She further explains that fundamentalists have a lot of support and that when combined with the lack of action from peaceful Muslims, Islam gets a bad reputation (“Understanding Islam” 40:50). Through interfaith relationships, Christians can meet the need of advocacy to assist in giving Muslims a greater voice. Daniel G. Groody states: “If we do not learn how to come to the table even with our differences, we will self-destruct... Beyond the differences, the basis of a common global ethic is a unified concern for a more just

and peaceful world” (150). Through interfaith relationships, Christians need to take that concern for a more unified and just world and demonstrate that Muslim fundamentalists do not represent the majority.

VII. Advocacy

Once individual Christians and churches alike have rediscovered what they believe about interfaith relationships and forming friendships with those who they call the other, they are ready to take on the role of the advocate. The situation in Xinjiang is challenging. Information about what is truly happening is heavily restricted by the government, and it is widely acknowledged that the Communist Party cannot be trusted to report unflattering information accurately. Many Uyghur living abroad have little to no contact with family members still living in the region, which many experts describe as a surveillance state. Access to Xinjiang or the labor camps is restricted, and often dangerous for those who are Uyghur. This leaves advocacy as the only plausible option for many who wish to be an ally for the Uyghur.

Advocacy is, in a sense, challenging an injustice. As Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda points out: “Where systematic injustice damages well-being and causes suffering, seeking the well-being or good of those who suffer, actively loving entails challenging injustice” (178). In order to take part in supporting oppressed, marginalized groups, one must first choose to love the group. If you love something or somebody, you want what is best for them. For the Uyghur, this means starting by listening to their stories so that they become part of local communities; then calling senators, showing love instead of hate, and making it known that the Uyghur and the larger Muslim community are not enemies: they are people who want basic human rights and a place to live that allows them to thrive.

Uyghur Agencies

There are a few specific agencies that are working to help the Uyghur. All of these agencies are founded, and primarily run, by Uyghur people. The Uyghur American Association (UAA) is based in Washington D.C. The agency's website is filled with news and other reports about the Uyghur. Donating money to the UAA would give them the ability to inform more people about the Uyghur crisis, assist Uyghur refugees with their needs, and fund cultural celebrations and educational events. Additionally, they have posted sample letters for individuals to send to their Senators and representatives. The UAA also provides an information sheet about what is going on in the concentration camps and a letter outlining why the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2019 should be passed. Individuals can change the names on the letters to their own representatives and sign their own names before sending them. They have also included a pre-written thank you letter for follow up contact. Founded by the UAA, the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) is on a mission to "promote human rights and democracy for the Uyghur people." They are an organization that promotes human rights research, reporting, and advocacy. On their donation page, the UHRP details a few of the ways donations are used, including interviewing concentration camp survivors in order to share stories, traveling to international capitals for meetings with policy makers, and campaigning to end Uyghur relationships with China. In addition to UAA's sample advocacy letter, the UHRP has posted briefings on their site that explain how to support more action to be taken in tracing and finding individuals that have gone missing, as well as reaching out to the Olympic Committee to get the 2022 games out of Beijing on the basis of human rights violations within the country. Finally, the World Uyghur Congress (WUC), based in Munich, Germany primarily works with the United Nation's Human Rights Council advocating for the Uyghur. Donations to the WUC

helps them support the Uyghur and preserve their culture. Despite the actions taken by the Communist Party, these agencies have plans in place to keep fighting for the rights and freedom of the Uyghur.

Actions of United States

Although the United States has taken some action in reference to the Uyghur crisis, most movement on this issue has happened only very recently. In June 2019, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs David J. Ranz gave a speech at the World Uyghur Congress stating: “The Chinese government’s detention, monitoring, and intimidation of Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang represents a deliberate attempt to suppress the identity of these groups.” He also called on other world leaders to stand against China’s actions stripping the Uyghur of their basic human rights.

The Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2019, sponsored by United States Senator Marco Rubio, calls for concrete measures to be taken against Beijing due to its detainment and re-education of the Uyghur. Additionally, the bill recommends that sanctions be placed on members of the Chinese government and the Communist Party and bans on the sale of United States-made goods to Xinjiang. The bill was passed in the House and is still seeking approval from the Senate. The Chinese government reacted angrily to the House’s passage of the bill. China’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Hua Chunying, explained that the Chinese government does not view their actions as abusive, but rather a step in the fight against violence, terrorism, and extremism. Further complicating the situation is the year-long trade war between China and the United States. Additionally, in November of 2019, United States President Donald Trump signed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019, after rising concerns that Beijing was not respecting the separate governance system of Hong Kong, which allows for

certain freedoms limited within mainland China. The United States is doing what it can while also facing the challenge of working with a very different government and belief system.

Ways to Advocate

For the Uyghur, advocacy cannot safely be done in China due to the government monitoring everything Chinese citizens do. In the United States, Americans have much more freedom to speak out. As noted earlier, the Uyghur Human Rights Act of 2019 has yet to be passed in Congress. Those who would like to support that act should call their representatives. Another part of advocacy is being aware of what is going on and not participating in things that are known to be damaging to groups such as the Uyghur. Now that it has been confirmed that Uyghur people are being used for labor, one way to advocate is to become more aware of where goods are coming from. Keep in mind that this is a large global topic and is one where individuals should do what they can to mitigate the damage. On the topic of labor and clothing, Julie Clawson explains: “As consumers we too share a responsibility for the clothing we buy. If we purchase items made by underpaid and abused workers, we participate in their exploitation” (133). The labor of the Uyghur is impossible to get around entirely because of globalization and how large-scale of an issue forced labor is. One source of hope is that there are more individuals and larger companies calling for more ethical clothing practices on a global scale as more people become aware of how clothing is produced.

Globalization brings forward both the good and the bad in society. People can react positively to these realizations in two ways. One is by donating to a charity that has been shown to provide responsible solutions, the other is to seek justice. The Uyghur need justice. About the difference in charity and justice Groody explains that “there is a sharp difference between these two whereby charity involves working to meet the immediate needs of others through

direct service and the direct aid to the poor, while justice involves institutional change and transforming unjust social structures” (97). Those who are advocating for the Uyghur are not seeking charity efforts, they are seeking justice for the Uyghur. They are seeking change in an unjust social structure that is causing cultural genocide.

VIII. Suggestions Guide and Explanation

As our world becomes more and more globalized there will be a greater number of people living in new cultures and new countries. As Christians, we need to accept this integration and learn to live peacefully with the other, even though that can seem scary. In this final section, I would like to offer a guide to those who want to reach out for the sake of understanding and cross-cultural and interreligious relationships. The guide is broken into two sections. One is a list of ways to be more open on a personal level, with the other speaking to actions that can be taken on a larger community level. Keep in mind that these are merely suggestions of best practices when engaging with other religions, in particular Muslims who have moved to the United States.

The first page is a basic introduction to the guide itself. It explains why having a guide is necessary and how to use it. The next page outlines Christian love, service, and hospitality as well as examples as to how these can be shown to other people groups. Page 3 outlines things individuals can do in their personal life. These ideas include being prayerful, appreciative, open, and intentional. Page 4 outlines things people can do in their communities, such as visit places of worship, attend interfaith meetings, eat at authentic restaurants, and advocate.

Be prayerful. The most important thing that those who would like to build interfaith relationships is to be prayerful. Start this even before initial contact has been made. This prayer should be for open hearts and open minds when talking to people with different belief systems.

These prayers could be about understanding, patience and guidance, and for Christians' attempt to understand other people who are different from themselves. Christians must remember that they need to have communication with their Father and that when they do His will He guides them through hard situations.

Find something to appreciate. Find something you appreciate about the new culture or religion. Appreciation creates a connection and reason to care about what is going on with the other religious or cultural group. One way to appreciate a culture or religion is to listen to its stories. Meyers points out that, "By listening to the stories of the poor, our new neighbors, and by sharing our stories with them we become neighbors to each other" (*Walking with the Poor* 218). Outside of sharing stories, many religions have facets that can be appreciated whether or not they match with an individual's personal belief.

The Uyghur come from a beautiful culture that is filled with hospitality and openness. The Uyghur have been through so much that makes it almost impossible not to appreciate where they are coming from. They have wonderful stories about growing up in a close-knit community and fascinating stories about the challenges they have faced as a religious minority in a country such as China. Islam has many wonderful qualities about it as well, such as the five pillars that highlight the core practices of the religion. Find something that can be appreciated in order to connect in a whole new way.

Be Open. Christians and churches have the tendency to teach people how to convert those who are seen as the other. However, taking a less conversion-based approach and instead seeking to meet basic needs of the other allows us to be more open and accepting of people who are different from us. According to Angel Meeks, the Outreach Coordinator at Advent Anglican Church, "...it is clear from the example of Jesus that we are to intentionally reach out in

friendship to those around us, regardless of if they have the spiritual beliefs we do.” Build friendships for the sake of understanding and more fruitful relationships will be the result.

The Uyghur need people who are open to them, as they are from an open and community-centered culture. They have different ways of looking at things that are foreign to us. Additionally, they are a displaced people. They need people who will let them talk and share on their terms. It is important for Christians to look from their point of view.

Be intentional. Building interfaith relationships requires intentionality. Both sides must be a base level of interest and investment in one another. Building intentional relationships requires knowing from the beginning that empathy, openness, and presence must start as soon as the friendship begins. Empathy is necessary because it allows access to the heart of the other and a way to connect with others that makes them feel safe and secure. Openness is a part of intentionality because it creates a non-judgmental relationship that is built on honesty and acceptance. Finally, any relationship that is worth having requires both parties to be present. If there is a sense of genuinely wanting to know each other, there is a need to do whatever it takes to maintain presence with each other. Agree to put phones away, meet in a place with few distractions, listen with genuine interest to what the other person is saying, and a wonderful friendship will be the end result.

Pastor Kevin Kopsa suggests that, “seeking to understand the other first before being understood by the other would help the two overcome many obstacles in getting along with each other.” He further discusses that reaching out to Muslims, for example, to learn about the Quran would be a beneficial way of being intentional.

Visit a place of worship. On a larger, community level, remember that it is usually perfectly okay to visit a place of worship- just make sure to call them first. Make sure there is an

understanding of what expectations are and be mindful of activities that are happening during that time. Is it time to pray? Should you wear a head covering? Remember the role of a visitor is to follow the lead of the worshippers so as not to be disrespectful. Many mosques, synagogues, and temples are open to respectful questions and want to teach others about their faith. If a question arises, do not be afraid to ask it. Additionally, many Uyghur, even here in the United States, are well connected to other Muslims in the area and have their support.

Interfaith Meetings. The idea of visiting another place of worship can be daunting. An alternative is to see what types of activities are going on in the local community. Is there a language meeting or a multicultural potluck happening? If there is, then go! The best way to meet new people is to want to meet them and actively look for ways to do so. If there is a way to volunteer to help Muslims who may be resettling in the community, see if you can be of service. Agencies frequently need help in these situations. If nothing else, these types of meetings help integrate others into the larger community and can give you and them to build relationships with others.

Advocate. One of the best things that can be done for oppressed people groups is to advocate. Many oppressed religious minority groups face a lack of support from outside groups. This is often due to entrenched prejudice against these groups, but even after they migrate (either voluntarily or by force), they face difficulty raising support due to lack of connections with their new community. Advocacy is sometimes the only thing that can be done for certain groups, no matter how much people want to help them.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the Uyghur Human Rights Act of 2019 has not yet been passed in the Senate. Those who support the Uyghur should call their local Senators in favor of the Act so that the United States is able to take a stronger stance against the cultural genocide the

Uyghur are facing. In many communities, Muslims face prejudice, with some Muslims becoming the victims of hate crimes. When this happens, stand with the Muslim community to show that prejudice and hate crimes are unacceptable and demonstrate the community's support for inclusion of Muslims and other minorities.

IX. Conclusion

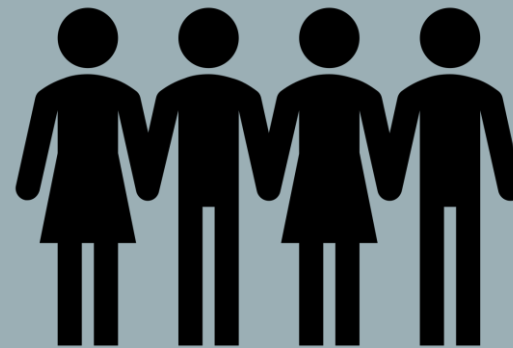
Using themes of love, service, and hospitality as the groundwork, individual Christians and churches alike need to look for opportunities to support and advocate for marginalized religious groups such as the Uyghur Muslims. With the world becoming increasingly globalized, this need will become greater. When both Christians and Muslims enter into the conversation, interfaith relationships allow for collaboration that actually creates sustainable change. When this happens, societies become more peaceful and communities become safer. The specific need of the Uyghur is to spread awareness of the crisis in Xinjiang in order to drive advocacy on their behalf to create safe societies for them both in the United States and in Xinjiang. The very least Christians in the United States can do is to welcome them into their new reality with an attitude of service and hospitality. It is with this attitude that Christians and Muslims must go forward and build interfaith relationships. When this happens, these two groups learn from each other as they support and advocate for those who are oppressed.

X. Appendix

Appendix 1: Suggestions for Forming Relationships

Interfaith Advocacy and
Support:

A Suggestions Guide for
Christians and Churches



Created By: Elisabeth Hartley

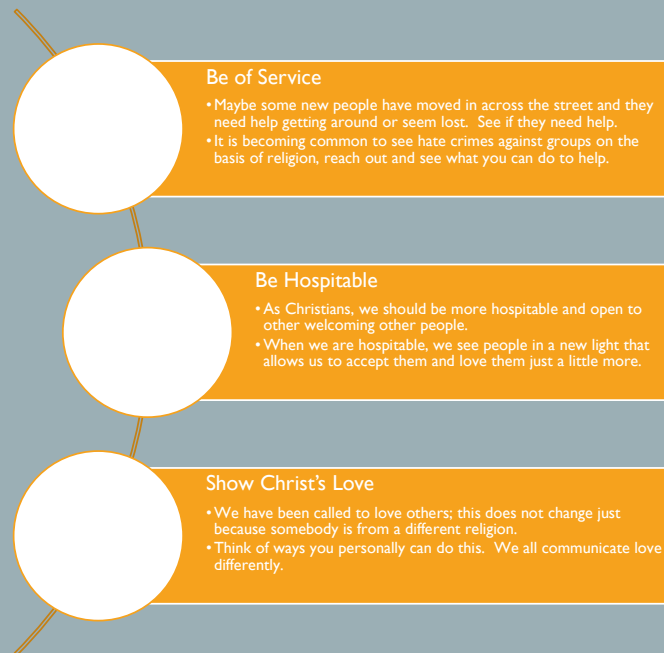
Introduction:

In an increasingly globalized world, we begin to encounter more and more people who are different from us. We do not always know what to do, how to act, or what to say. This guide seeks to guide Christians and churches toward interfaith relationships with oppressed religious minority groups in the United States. The United States is becoming increasingly religiously diverse and there is a great need for Christians to become more open to other religions for the sake of mutual support and understanding. The suggestions made here are just that, suggestions.



Christian Principles

There are many Christian principles that allow us to demonstrate solidarity with other people. Among those are service, hospitality, and love.



In Personal Life

Be Prayerful

- Ask for an open heart and mind.
- Pray that you notice more people that you would not have previously seen.
- Ask for opportunities to connect with somebody different from yourself.

Be Appreciative

- Find something you appreciate about the other religion.
- This can be something they believe, a way they worship, or something they practice.

Be Open

- Do not judge what they are saying or what they believe.
- Listen with an open heart and open mind.
- Seek to understand their point of view

Be Intentional

- Give those you interact with your undivided attention.
- Ask questions that you are genuinely curious about.
- Be completely in the moment with the new person.

These are actionable steps individuals can take in their personal lives. To make an impact in interfaith relationships, these four steps offer a place to start and reflect.

In Communities

Visit the Places of Worship

- Most places are open and willing to share the lessons of their belief system.
- Be respectful and act like you do not know anything.
- Remember that it is okay to feel weird and out of place but do not let that hold you back from attending.

Attend Interfaith Meetings

- Do research to find places in your community that encourages interfaith conversations.
- Attend meetings with an open heart and an open mind that allows you to be receptive to what those from the various religions are saying.

Eat at Authentic Restaurants

- This is not to say every person who works at an authentic restaurant is from a different or of a different religion but there is a cross-cultural lesson to be learned when we eat the food of a different country.
- Ask questions about the food or about the culture if you feel it is an appropriate time and place to ask. This will require observing and listening to what is going on around you.

Advocate

- Advocate within your community to share how important various belief systems are.
- If you know any of the groups are oppressed, see what you can do to help.

There is a lot that can be said about interfaith relationships in communities. On a community level, actively forming interfaith relationships allow to share what we know to be factually true about other religions.

Appendix 2: Information Sheets and Letters from the Uyghur American Association.

Stop China's Ethnic Cleansing of Millions of Uyghurs!



Why Should You Care?

Uyghurs are Turkic-speaking Muslim people with a population of more than twenty million in East Turkistan, (officially known as Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China), which was invaded by Communist China in 1949. The Chinese Government has forced Uyghurs to renounce their ethnic identity, religion, and culture in a 21st century police state and detained one to three million innocent Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in ethnic cleansing camps since 2016. Chinese Communist dictatorship is the greatest threat to global security, democracy, and universal human rights. The Uyghurs' tragedy today could become other nations' tragedy tomorrow if we fail to stop China's genocide of Uyghurs!

What Can You Do To Help?

1. Ask your elected officials and the administration to support the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2019 (S.178 and HR.649)
2. Boycott Chinese products and ask US companies operating in China to stop their business as long as China keeps these camps and uses forced labor in camps
3. Follow the news coverage on Uyghur issues and promote public awareness through media coverage and social media (#Uyghurs or #Uighurs)
4. Make a donation to the Uyghur American Association (tax-exempt, non-profit)

For more information, please visit <https://uyghuramerican.org> or scan the QR code below.



Date:

The Honorable [Name of Congress member]

Address

Dear Congressman or Congresswoman [Name of Congress member]

As a constituent, I would like to ask you to support the bipartisan bill “Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2019” (UHRP Act) to condemn gross human rights violations of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in East Turkistan (officially known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region). The bill was introduced by Senators Marco Rubio and Bob Menendez in the Senate (Bill # S.178).

Since 2017, Communist Chinese Government has stepped up its crackdown in East Turkistan, turning the entire region into a 21st century police state and imposing total control over millions of Uyghurs through [an unprecedented level of coercive social and political re-engineering to eradicate the Uyghur people’s ethno-religious identity](#). Beijing has incarcerated [over a million Uyghurs](#), Turkic-speaking Muslim people, in ethnic cleansing camps where Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims are held without due process, brainwashed with Communist ideology, tortured, and forced to renounce their religion. [Thousands of children separated from their parents](#) are raised in orphanages under the Communist Party indoctrination and could become victims of human and organ trafficking. [Human rights organizations](#) and [survivors](#) have reported many cases of torture and death in these camps. China has also been harassing Uyghurs living in the US and other Western countries to control their freedom to speak out against Chinese policies by threatening retaliation against family members back home. In order to cover up its crime, the government has cut off communication between the region and the rest of the world.

An economically and militarily growing Chinese dictatorship is the greatest threat to the US national security, global leadership, and American values of freedom, democracy, and human rights that make this nation the beacon of hope for the oppressed around the world. Please support this bill to stop China’s Communist Government from annihilating the Uyghur minority and to prevent another genocide that would stain the 21st century world history. Uyghurs’ tragedy today could become other nations’ tragedy tomorrow if we fail to stop China’s genocide of Uyghurs.

Sincerely,

Thank You for Supporting Millions of Uyghurs in China's Concentration Camps

Dear [Name]:

We would like to express our deepest gratitude for your support to save millions of Uyghur people from China's concentration camps by calling on the administration to sanction Chinese officials and businesses that are responsible for this brutality. The Chinese dictatorship is the greatest threat to the US national security, global leadership, and American values of freedom, democracy, and human rights that make this nation the beacon of hope for the oppressed around the world. We hope you will continue to be the voice for the silenced Uyghur people and urge the administration to stop the Chinese Communist Government from annihilating the Uyghur nation and prevent another genocide that would stain the 21st century world history.

Sincerely,



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