

“And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”

Mark 12:31

Loving Our Neighbor

It's not every day that the Consul General of a Middle Eastern country asks to come for a visit to the Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC). When the Consul General arrived with his staff, he explained that he was new to his position and was troubled by events around the world involving violence and terrorism. He was concerned about the rise of 'Islamophobia' or anti-Muslim sentiment. He wanted to reach out to other religions in Hong Kong to get to know them and to build better relationships. In our conversation, he learned that the HKCC also actively seeks ways to build friendship and engage in dialogue with other world religions.

At one point, the Consul General asked us how Christians viewed what was happening in the world where more and more violent conflicts were breaking out between cultures and religions. I thought for a moment. And the words of a Syrian Christian I had heard just a few days earlier came to mind: "Christians always stand for non-violence and non-retaliation. We must always forgive. We are taught by Jesus in the bible to love our enemies." And that's what I told him. I couldn't think of anything else that is more central to our Christian faith than loving God, loving our neighbor and loving our enemy.

The Consul General didn't know us and we didn't know him. But he came in search of peace and a sign of friendship among people of faith. I wonder what would happen if local churches and Christians took more initiative to reach out to get to know people of other faiths. We often speak of "extending the right hand of fellowship" to our Christian brothers and sisters in worship. Perhaps we could find more opportunities to shake hands with those in our own cities that come from other lands and cultures and faiths. Like us, they desire nothing more than living together in peace and friendship.

Judy Chan serves with the Hong Kong Christian Council. She is responsible for communications for the Council.



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