

# Guidelines Provide Roadmap for Christian-Muslim Relations

Encounters between Christianity and Islam are increasingly common and complex, as members of both faiths increasingly live side by side.

When any faiths have to occupy the same geographical space, there is bound to be tension. For Christians and Muslims, the nature of their beliefs inevitably heightens that tension, as both are mission faiths. A Hindu or a Sikh doesn't mind if you share his faith or not: a Christian or Muslim does, at least in theory. We cannot be indifferent to each other's profession.

Baptists are theologically on the front line of this issue, as we are culturally an overwhelmingly evangelical denomination. Indeed, the third item in our threefold Declaration of Principle is "that it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelization of the world." The Declaration forms the "basis of this Union." Without assenting to it, we are arguably out of fellowship with other Baptists.

So the guidelines prepared by the Christian Muslim Forum are hugely significant. They do not compromise on the legitimacy of evangelism or "Da'wah," but they provide a framework within which it may be undertaken. They should be studied by all Christians and Muslims whose faith is worked out in this kind of encounter.

It should be said, too, that this document is prepared in a particular context, namely that of United Kingdom Christian-Muslim relations. So it addresses the question of what happens when a Muslim wants to convert to Christianity, and answers it very differently from how it would be answered in, say, Saudi Arabia or Pakistan.

The final guideline is “Whilst we may feel hurt when someone we know and love chooses to leave our faith, we will respect their decision and will not force them to stay or harass them afterwards.”

This is the courageous voice of British Islam seeking a way of living with the tensions of a multi-faith society while remaining true to itself. It is not yet Islamic orthodoxy, but it is a brave and helpful step.

[Mark Woods](#) is editor of [The Baptist Times](#).