

Dear friends,

I am delighted to share with you the latest initiative at the Centre of Christian-Muslim Understanding and Partnership, which has brought us great joy. As a team, we are honoured to have hosted a unique educational experience that we named, "A Journey of Learning." I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to His Eminence, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, Dr. Ahmed al-Tayeb, and Archbishop Sami Fawzy, the Archbishop of the Anglican Province of Alexandria, for their support in establishing the centre. I also thank all of you for your continuous support and encouragement since the beginning of the centre's activities last year.

## "Journey of Learning"

*A five-day conference for Muslim and Christian students*

In an historic and unprecedented experience, the Centre for Christian-Muslim Understanding and Partnership hosted a conference from July 29<sup>th</sup> to August 3<sup>rd</sup> in which a number of thirty students from Al-Azhar University and various Christian theological colleges participated. The participants were a balanced mixture of women and men. In view of the title, "A Journey of Learning," we envisioned these students on a real journey characterized by different stages, during which they learn about the principles and values of both the Islamic and Christian religious traditions. The new dimension of this initiative is that Christian students learned directly from Muslims about Islam, and Muslim students learned directly from Christians about Christianity, which to our knowledge has not happened before in Egypt.

The conference was organized by Dr. Matthew Anderson, the Academic Director at the centre, in collaboration with Dr. Ismail Abdullah, a professor at Al-Azhar University. The lectures were delivered by professors from Al-Azhar University and various theological colleges. Mr. Karim Gerges, the Director of International Relations at the centre, assisted in the organization.



*1. Revd. Dr. Matthew Anderson & Dr. Ismail Abd-Allah*



*2. Revd. Dr. Stephen Plant, Cambridge University.*



*Dr. Magdy Ashour, Al-Azhar University.*

The conference started with public lectures on the topic "Charity Work in Christianity and Islam. Revd. Dr. Stephen Plant of Cambridge University and Dr. Magdy Ashour, Senior Advisor of the Grand Mufti of Egypt.

### Conference sessions included the following:

- The Islamic Concept of Charity
- The Christian Concept of Charity
- Principles of Quranic Interpretation (Tafsir)
- Principles of Biblical Interpretation
- The Role of Religion in Preserving Community Values and Ethics
- Proof of God's Existence in the Islamic Concept
- Proof of God's Existence in the Christian Concept
- Human Suffering: An Islamic Perspective
- Human Suffering: A Christian Perspective.
- Embracing Diversity in the Islamic Concept
- Embracing Diversity in the Christian Concept
- Love your neighbour: An Islamic Perspective
- Love your neighbour: A Christian Perspective



The conference provided an excellent opportunity for discussion after each lecture which helped the students to gain listening skills. Additionally, the conference included networking and meal-sharing times, which contributed to the development of warm relationships among the participants.

### Feedback from students :

- "Since tomorrow is the last day of the conference, unfortunately, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the organizers of this conference. The conference has truly benefited everyone, and we have learned more about the Islamic religion through our Muslim brothers and sisters. We interacted more and all became friends and brothers/sisters to each other."



- "I want to thank everyone for the beautiful spirit of brotherhood and love that prevailed throughout the event. We are truly happy to have participated in this wonderful journey of learning. It was indeed a learning journey, just as Archbishop Dr. Mounir said on the first day, a delightful cultural dialogue. Personally, I gained a lot from it."



- "We got to know each other closely, remembered our societal and ethical values, and remembered our love for each other beyond belief and religion. I am pleased to have met my Christian sisters and

brothers; you were more than amazing. My treasure from these sessions is the beautiful companionship, feelings of love, warmth, and purity.”

- “I can see that all the learners today have reached a level of maturity in terms of integration and listening to other points of view.”
- “These past four days have been truly amazing. I have met wonderful people and learned the meaning of reconciliation with oneself and with others.”
- “I am deeply thankful to the centre.”

### **Moving Forward**

We believe that “A Journey of Learning” should be repeated more than once every year. In addition, we are planning to offer monthly sessions on relevant topics that will help us to maintain the positive momentum. We thank God for the success of this pioneering experience and look forward to the next phase of the journey.

With our best regards.

+Mouneer

Archbishop Emeritus  
General Director  
Centre for Christian-Muslim Understanding and Partnership