



The LUMinary

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"Asked and Answered"

"There are so many religions in the world. Can't we all just get along?"

The short answer to this is, yes. We can all get along. The good news is that in many contexts, there are a lot of good relationships between people of various faiths, though certainly not enough. The longer answer to this, though, could fill volumes (and has). And so, it seems appropriate for the purpose of this article to provide something in between the short and long answers.

So often, when to answer this question, we have to first recognize some important things: The first is that there are a wide variety of religions (i.e. Christianity, Judaism, Muslim, etc.), and within those religions, any number of denominations/sects (i.e. Methodist, Lutheran, Catholic, Reform, Sunni, etc.). Here we'll give our attention to a few major religions of the world. But we can't lose sight of the fact that the varieties are abundant!

The second thing we need to recognize is that not every Christian believes and acts in exactly the same way, just as not all Muslims act in the same way, just as...just as...just as. The list could go on and on. And so, while I may say, "Christians believe," I'm admittedly using a broad generalization. As long as we know this upfront, we can avoid making assumptions about individuals.

So, where do we begin?

"The LORD was attentive to Sarah just as he had said, and the LORD carried out just what he had promised her. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son for Abraham when he was old, at the very time God had told him. Abraham named his son—the one Sarah bore him—Isaac. Sarah saw Hagar's son laughing, the one Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham. So she said to Abraham, "Send this servant away with her son! This servant's son won't share the inheritance with my son Isaac.""

Genesis 21:1-3, 9-10 CEB

Abraham and Sarah were growing old in age and had yet to have a son to whom they could leave their inheritance and legacy, something that was extremely important to people in Biblical times. Feeling it was her fault (this was pre-science, remember), Sarah told Abraham to go and conceive a child with their servant, Hagar. Hagar then gave birth to a son, Ishmael, who would be considered Abraham's first born son. Soon after though, God's promise for a son came true, despite the seeming impossibility, and Sarah became pregnant and gave birth to Abraham's second son, Isaac. Fearing that Hagar's son, Ishmael, would be considered greater than *her* son, Isaac, Sarah demanded that Hagar and Ismael be sent away so that *"this servant's son won't share the inheritance with my son Isaac"* (v.10). Isaac went on to continue the lineage of the Israelites – the Jewish people – and Ishmael, the father of Islam.

Did you feel the discomfort in the story? Abraham and Sarah send Hagar and Ismael away because of Sarah's regret and jealousy toward Ishmael's birthright. It's not terribly hard to see where the beginning of animosity and division begins. Now, as Christians, we draw our faith ancestry to the Jewish people, the people of Isaac. And so, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism all name Abraham as the "father of the faith." For this reason, these three global religions are called "Abrahamic" faiths.

So back to the question: *"Can't we all just get along?"* As I already said, the short answer is yes. We can. But so often, when we offer the simple answer, it fails to take into account the immense pain that needs of be acknowledged. It also creates the temptation to ignore the complexity of the relationships.

Acknowledge the Pain

The pain - and the cause of it - in the relationship between religions is immensely complex, but one that can often be brought back to a central challenge: who are the people of God? Judaism has always claimed that they were the chosen people of God, drawing their ancestry back to Isaac – the first born of Abraham. Islam has done the same, only through Ishmael. There have been fights over rights to land, holy sites, and religious claims. Christians have been no strangers to this fight, either. For centuries, people of faith have waged war against others in the name of God. Even today, these disputes, wars, and violence persist.

(Pastor's Pen continued on page 3...)



What is a Grandparent? (according to 8 year olds)

- They know we should have snack-time before bedtime and they say prayers with us every time, and kiss us even when we've acted bad.
- They wear glasses and funny underwear.

April Volunteers:



Coffee Hour:

- 7: Clint & Carrie Rathbun Hawks
- 14: Deb McKenzie/Marty Divine
- 21: Duane & Glenna Ginther
- 28: Martha West/Wendy Venier

Head Usher: Randy Meder

COMMITTEE CORNER

Finance:

Beginning the first Sunday in April, we will be fully set up to receive donations through credit or debit card transactions through a secure network provided by VANCO Financials. Additionally, we'll have the ability to set up electronic giving through our church website using checking/savings accounts, as well as debit/credit cards. While we know that not everyone will want to utilize this form of giving (and that's more than okay), we hope that you will consider it. More info will be coming out about this new giving tool, but please know that your continued giving is immensely important to the continued ministries of this church.

Remember the BIG Orange Buckets (B.O.B.) on the last Sunday of the month. 100% of this extra offering goes toward missions!

Missions:

April 14 will be UMCOR Sunday.

Memorials Work Area:

The Memorial Work Area is pleased to announce that construction on the bell structure will begin soon. We would like to thank the individuals and families who made memorial contributions to this project.



- 3: Diana Carpenter
- 10: Jill Hobbs
- 18: Wilma Stichler
- 19: Joan Peck
- 19: Rick Hart
- 20: Pastor Brian & Stephanie
- 26: Sean Divine

Did you know that we still collect
Boxtops for Education



and the UPC code from
Our Family brand labels?



There are collection boxes for these on the table at
the back of the foyer.

Pastor Brian is sharing Lenten reflections on
YouTube each week.

Video links are being sent to your email each
week.

If we don't have your current email, please send
the office a message so we can get that set up.

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(...Pastor's Pen continued)

However, as I noted earlier, this isn't true for everyone. Many don't look at people of another faith and feel angry, hurt, violent, or vengeful. But many do. And so, we need to see this pain, and seek to understand it. It becomes equally important that we seek to discover opportunities to repent, seek forgiveness, and to offer the same. This step cannot be ignored if we are to truly "get along."

The Complexities

Perhaps the most obvious complexity is that Christians, Jews, and Muslims all believe different things. Even within religions, there are a plethora of beliefs, not all shared. For example, Christians believe that Jesus was the incarnation of God and the messiah. Jews don't believe this, but do understand Jesus as being a very important person. He was a rabbi in the Jewish faith, after all. Muslims don't recognize Jesus as a messiah, either, but believe that he was a prophet of God (held in such high esteem that the words "Peace be upon him" are recited after writing or speaking his name). Muslims believe that the prophet Muhammad (7th Century A.D.) was the final prophet sent by God, and was the recipient of God's ultimate word (contained in the Quran).

When we look at these different beliefs, it may be tempting to think that we're too far apart from one another in faith, that there's no way we can ever see eye to eye. But this couldn't be further from the truth. For instance, all three religions hold as a fundamental belief in the oneness of God (in other words, all three are monotheists). In fact, not only do we all worship one God, we worship the *same* God, even though we may have different names for God (Yahweh, God, Allah, etc.). But let's acknowledge the complexity.

While we worship the same God (the God of Abraham, remember), we don't always agree on what God desires or says, or even the nature of God. Still, none of this is a bad thing. Instead, it's our collective unwillingness to fully listen to one another, seeking to understand, but instead to believe our assumptions and misunderstandings about each other that is a "bad thing."

Can We All Get Along?

And so, back to the question once more. "Can we all get along?" We can, and if, as Christians, we're going to live into Christ's command to love our neighbors, then we must. It is only through a willingness to grow in relationship with one another that we will be able to live as neighbors with each other.

To help achieve this goal, I will be working with local faith leaders from Islam, Judaism, and others to arrange for opportunities for site visits to synagogues, mosques, and other places of worship so that we can learn from one another, acknowledge our differences, embrace our commonalities, and begin to see one another as neighbors in God's great creation.

Details for these opportunities will be announced shortly.

Blessings and peace,

Pastor Brian

- Holy Week Service — April 18th
 - Potluck Dinner: 5:30 pm
 - Worship Service: 6:30 pm
- Ecumenical Good Friday Service — April 19th
 - 7 pm at Laingsburg UMC
- Easter Sunday — April 21st
 - Sunrise Service: 8:00 am
 - Continental Breakfast: 8:45 am
 - Worship Service: 10:00 am
 - Easter Egg Hunt following the worship service





"THE CORE" YOUTH GROUP NEWS

LOCK-IN!

We will be having a lock-in Friday, April 5, at St. Isidore's. We hope you can all come, and bring friends! The youth groups from St. Isidore's, Connect and the Congregational church have been invited.

In recognition of Lent, this will be a time of fasting (liquids only). Through the evening and night, we'll play games (may even go to the elementary school gym), have devotional time and watch movies. In the morning, we'll be preparing sack lunches for the Homeless Angels shelter in Lansing. We'll travel there to serve around 70 people between 12:00 and 1:30. After that, the kids will all go to Brody Hall's massive cafeteria to chow down.

What we need your help with:

- ⇒ Safe Sanctuary-certified chaperones and drivers (we can do shifts if you'd like)
 - If you aren't Safe Sanctuary certified, it's very easy! Let Pastor Brian or me know, and we'll get you the packet.
 - The number of drivers we'll need to Lansing will depend on how many of our kids sign up. SS policy states our youth can only be transported by a certified adult.

Our fundraising dollars will go toward our share of food for the sack lunches, as well as water and Gatorade for the youth. So far, thanks to the pop can drive, we have raised \$190 additional dollars for the CORE Youth Group! Keep bringing in your cans and bottles!!! Thank you!





#UMCORSunday

GIVE US COURAGE TO ACT IN
WAYS THAT DEMONSTRATE
JUSTICE AND MERCY.



UMCOR Sunday: April 14th

Gifts on UMCOR Sunday make it possible for UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) to use 100% of all other contributions on the projects the donors specify, instead of on administrative or fundraising costs.



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