

Mosque Opening:

Allah-u-Akbar – God is Great and I give thanks and praise to God for the gift to Ipswich of this mosque where God’s Muslim community can gather for prayer and other activities. I am also grateful to you for your invitation to myself and my parishioners.

Many Christians would not realize that we have been in conversation with Muslims for many centuries. One of the greatest Christian Philosophers and Theologians, Thomas Aquinas, in the 13th Century critiqued the works of one of the greatest Islamic philosophers, al-Ghazali and found many areas of similarity and agreement.

Unfortunately, through ignorance and the distortion of our religions, there have been many wars and acts of violence between people of our different faiths. I believe that in the current climate of fear and religious distortion, our one almighty and all glorious God, whether called Allah, Yahweh or simply God, is calling all people of good faith to be open to each other to grow in a deeper understanding of God’s ways for the good of all people. This mosque, I believe, is a great gift and your invitation to me and other Christians, is a wonderful sign of God at work.

There are many areas of disagreement between our two faiths but there are also many similarities. We both believe in one all-powerful, all-wise, and most generous God. We share many of the same prophets; we are all children of Abraham, peace be upon him, whose faith in God was so complete. We both believe in the need to base our lives on prayer, compassion for the poor and vulnerable, justice, and respect for all life. Both our religions condemn the destruction of human life and call for peace.

In my limited experience of Islam, I believe that you are a great example to Christians in a very important area. Whether it’s because the very word “Islam” means “submission”, or because of the many times I’ve heard Muslims utter the word, “Inshallah” – God willing. Both these words point to an attitude that submits to God’s will in *all* aspects of life.

This example reminds us Christians that Jesus taught us that God’s area of authority covers all areas of life and He summed it up by the words “Not my will, but your will be done.” The example of faithful Muslims reminds us that it is not valid to compartmentalize religion by claiming that God’s will does not have a role in business, economics, politics, security or other areas. I look forward to seeing how God will use this Mosque and you, the people of Islam, to foster the good of all people in our city.

Inshallah, may all of us, whether Muslim or Christian, be active agents of God’s peace and good will amongst all people.

May the peace of God be upon you all.