

Interfaith Association for Service to Humanity and Nature

(Association of interfaith communities and practitioners; founded by Sr. Lucy Kurien, Maher, India)

Who is eligible to join?

- a. Anyone at least 18 years of age—irrespective of nationality, race, gender, class, religion, caste, or marital status.
- b. Anyone who is drawn to the concept of loving and respecting every religion.
- c. Anyone who is concerned about the suffering of humanity, and is ready to do something about it.
- d. Anyone who is concerned about the ecological destruction of the natural world, and wants to do something about it.

What is interfaith spirituality?

- We respect and love all religions. We never put down anyone's religion, or uphold one religion to the exclusion of others. What we want is to believe and respect interfaith religion, inclusive of all faith traditions.
- We respect all religions. In our community spiritual practices, we often use "God" to represent the Divine, rather than invoking any particular name or form of God to the exclusion of others. In the case of non-theistic religions, we refer to Dharmakaya (in Buddhism) or the Arhats (in Jainism), or the Tao (in Taoism).
- We believe that God is far too vast to be encompassed within any one religion.
- In our interfaith community prayers, meditations, worship, and celebrations—spontaneous prayers and songs generally refer to the Divine energy / light, rather than any one form of the Divine to the exclusion of others. For certain religious festivals, a particular divine name may be invoked and celebrated (such as Krishna for Diwali, Jesus for Christmas, Allah for Eid, Buddha for the Vesak festival, etc.). In such cases, we take special care to also celebrate the other major religious festivals. In this way, all can pray and worship together, in shared reverence for the Divine, and respect of all religions.
- Commitment to interfaith spirituality does not mean abandoning one's own religion or faith. Inwardly, each person is free to relate to their own faith and conception of God or the Divine, or ultimate reality in whatever concept.

We stand in community for loving service.

- Wherever people have established a community of interfaith, we aspire to reach out, connect, and network with that community. What is of prime importance for us is the commitment to Seva/Service. If we are lucky enough to live in a community like Maher or another interfaith community, we commit to engaging in prayer at least twice a day—morning and evening.
- Wherever two or more are committed to interfaith spirituality, an interfaith community can be formed and recognized as a part of the Association.
- In community worship or prayers, no specific religious prayers will be used (not even the Our Father, Gayatri Mantra, or other faith-specific prayers), but only prayers addressed to the Divine. The one exception to this would be on celebrations of major religious festivals (Diwali, Christmas, Eid, Vesak Festival, etc.)

We commit to personal spiritual practice and “inner work”

It is not *we* who do the seva/service, but the Divine who does seva through us. To be an effective instrument for Divine service, we must have a personal spiritual practice that sustains our living connection to the Divine within. Seva without spirituality is a sure path to burn out. We commit to doing our inner work and daily spiritual practice. (“The outer work can never be great if the inner work is small, and the outer work can never be small if the inner work is great.”—Meister Eckhart).

We commit to be sensitive and mindful of others

We always maintain an inclusive prayerful atmosphere that welcomes all. So even if we are two Catholics, for example, once we are committed to interfaith we stick to this commitment. However, if we happen to go to a temple/Church/Mosque, then let us respect them and join in their worship, but in our interfaith community, prayers are addressed only to the Divine. If by mistake someone speaks a faith-specific prayer, please gently remind the person, so that we always maintain an inclusive prayerful atmosphere that welcomes all.

The formula for the commitment

I, (Name in block letters) commit myself to interfaith spirituality in Maher interfaith community.

My first priority is Seva/ Service to people and to nature. I am committed to stand by the suffering humanity.

I will strive to alleviate the pains of people within my capacity, and respect and look after mother earth.

I commit to my daily spiritual practice, and to doing my inner work to be an effective instrument of Seva/Service.

I promise to use natural and monetary recourses as carefully as possible. The more we use sparingly, the more people in need we can help.

I will always respect and honor all faiths of all peoples. I will respect and love all people whatever religion or caste they may belong to. I will never ridicule and put down anyone, nor show partiality to anyone.

Signature:

Name:

Date of commitment:

Place:

Male/Female

Address: