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60. Connecting with local interfaith groups

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Posted by [Brian Talcott, CSB](#) on May 15, 2012 1:09:44 AM

The other day I had the privilege of speaking to a local group of members of the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) www.noetic.org. The focus of their work is on issues of consciousness, and I spoke on the Christian Science perspective regarding the biblical basis for healing through prayer. Because I was a member of IONS for about 15 years, I knew of their extensive clinical work on the healing impact of prayer. The group was multi-faith and found connections with the concepts I shared—from their many different backgrounds.

Here on this Ecumenical and Interfaith Dialogue blog and [discussion forum](#), many people have asked how to go about getting involved with a local interfaith group in their area. Many national and international interfaith organizations have local chapters of groups that work together on community issues locally. The best way to find local groups is through their websites.

Why connect with these groups? Religious groups that tend to be isolated are misunderstood and seen to be irrelevant to the challenges our societies face. As we bring our spiritual insights and practice to the table we can make a greater difference in the world. The world needs healing in so many areas, and Christian Scientists have much to offer on how to pray effectively about social challenges, as well as individual challenges.

Everyone joining such groups does so with some trepidation. The questions are pretty universal. What do they think about my religion? Will I be understood, rejected or just ignored? What will they expect of me? What do I have to contribute that will be useful and appreciated by the group?

I find it helpful to remember I am not a set of beliefs encountering sets of beliefs. I am an individual getting to know other individuals. We have much in common. Love and respect for them opens the way—and is reciprocated generously by them.

They may wish to know something about your faith, and they may not. They will want to learn how you can be useful. As Christian Scientists we may want to share divine healing with them. That's okay when it is relevant to the tasks they are addressing. Sharing a physical healing when the task is to address hunger or civil rights may not be useful. However, describing how I might pray about hunger or civil rights usually is much appreciated. They may take notes. Our insights into the effectiveness of prayer in addressing social as well as personal problems is useful. Interfaith encounters, as you pray through them, will enrich your understanding and practice of your own faith.