

For Immediate Release

Thursday, April 1, 2004

A statement from the President of Toronto Conference on behalf of Toronto Conference of The United Church of Canada condemning recent arson fire at Pickering Mosque.

Toronto Conference strongly condemns the arson fire and vandalism which took place in the mosque at the Al-Mahdi Islamic Centre in Pickering recently. We condemn the use of Jesus' name in this profane act of violence. We express our compassion for and solidarity with the Al-Mahdi Islamic Centre community and the entire Muslim community. Actions of racialised violence do not reflect the best that we hope for and work for in a just Canadian society. When neighbours are threatened the whole community suffers.

We celebrate the acts of solidarity expressed by various faith groups, actions which stand as a true witness to the common humanity we share as children of God.

In the context of a commitment to engage the *Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace*, our commitment expressed in *That We May Know Each Other, United Church – Muslim Relations Today: toward a United Church of Canada understanding of the relationship between Christianity and Islam in the Canadian context*, and in these days following the *International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*, we call United Church people and communities to prayer, hospitality, discussion, acts of solidarity and accompaniment with neighbours and neighbouring faith communities. We strongly encourage United Church people to undertake reflection and dialogue detailed in the study document *That We May Know Each Other*.

We commit ourselves to sustained work in overcoming violence, and we appreciate the ongoing dedication of the InterChurch InterFaith committee and the Anti-Racism task group in their work to overcome racialised violence and violence stemming from religious intolerance.

Rev. Heather Burton, President, Toronto Conference, The United Church of Canada

For further information, please contact:

Margaret Sumadh, co-chair InterChurch InterFaith committee, 416 241 2677,
torontoconference@bellnet.ca.

-30-

For further reference

Toronto Conference (anti-racism, interfaith dialogue) www.torontoconference.ca
United Church of Canada (*That We May Know Each Other: United Church – Muslim Relations Today*)
www.united-church.ca
World Council of Churches (Decade to Overcome Violence) www.wcc-coe.org
Canadian Islamic Congress www.canadianislamiccongress.com