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## **Religious Ceremonies Involving More than One Faith Tradition**

At certain times in Canadian public life, significant events call on the resources of the religious and spiritual traditions of our land. These might be occasions of public mourning, as in the case of the crash of SwissAir Flight 111 near Peggy's Cove. They might be solemn events such as the bringing home of the Unknown Soldier to Ottawa in the summer of 2000. They could be moments of celebrating our history, such as the memorializing of the "Famous Five Women" from the Persons Case. In communities across our land, Thanksgiving Day is often marked with multifaith celebrations.

The Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) offers the following guidelines as a contribution towards acknowledging the multifaith realities of our country. Developed by the CCC Interfaith Relations Committee in consultation with partners from the Muslim and Jewish faiths, and adopted as a statement of the Council, these guidelines provide suggestions for planning and conducting public religious ceremonies that include the participation of a diversity of religious traditions.

### **Guidelines for Religious Ceremonies Involving More than One Faith Tradition**

Prayer involving members of more than one religious tradition is appropriate on public occasions when the wider community comes together to celebrate, or to mourn following tragedy. As members of diverse communities in consultation with one another we have made the following recommendations to our constituencies.

Such religious ceremonies grow out of, and reflect, respect for all traditions present. This respect needs to be present in the planning as well as in the actual event. Faith communities should take the initiative to work collaboratively in planning such events. They are free to name their own leadership to participate in planning and in the actual prayer.

- Introductory bidding prayers should be inclusive, in the form of an invocation that opens the community to the divine presence. Sensitivity toward all participants ought to guide all activities.
- Each participating leader should be free to pray from within his or her own tradition, and to read from texts that are considered sacred in his or her own tradition.
- Leaders may speak positively about their own tradition, not negatively about the other faith traditions.
- It is appropriate to pray individually and collectively for the good and well-being of the whole community gathered. It is inappropriate in this context to offer prayers which imply the incompleteness of another faith tradition.

The aim of such religious ceremonies is to foster that respectful presence which enables members of a community to support and affirm each other. These guidelines give all participants the freedom to speak from their own traditions fully.