CHARTER ON NEIGHBOURLINESS

A shared civic commitment to live well with one another as neighbours

❖ *Explanatory Notes* ❖



Explanatory Notes

The Charter on Neighbourliness sets out a shared civic aspiration for how people in Singapore can live well with one another as neighbours. What we have built together in Singapore is precious — a society where difference can be held with dignity, and where each generation has a part to play in preserving and strengthening the harmony we share.

In developing the Charter, representatives from Singapore's faith communities reflected, from within their respective traditions, on what good neighbourliness asks of them. Their contributions brought different perspectives and expressions to the five commitments in the Charter.

These Notes provide some context to those commitments. They recognise the distinctive language contributed by the different faith traditions while keeping the Charter itself as a civic expression that all can relate to. The traditions are not presented as saying the same thing; rather, each contributes, in its own way, towards the neighbourliness we seek to strengthen in Singapore.

We are neighbours.

❖ From proximity to belonging ❖

We share one home and a common future.
We belong together, as one society.

Faith communities express the idea of belonging through the language of family, community and interconnectedness. The Hindu concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam refers to seeing the world as one family. In the Bahá'í Faith, the Oneness of Humanity relates to this idea of belonging. For Sikhs, Community and the Wellbeing of all are paramount, while Jewish reflections emphasise shared welfare and the idea of society as a home that different communities help to build together. Taoism invites us to widen our perspective beyond the self, relating the well-being of others, families, towns and society to our own.

Charter on Neighbourliness affirmed by the leaders of Singapore's ten faith communities on this 14th day of October 2026

We uphold the dignity of our common humanity.

❖ *From recognising difference to honouring equal worth* ❖

Our neighbours' well-being is one with ours. Their right to be honoured and respected is the same as ours.

Faith communities express the idea of human dignity through the language of shared humanity, reciprocity and regard for the well-being of others. Jewish reflections emphasise human dignity and shared welfare. In the Bahá'í Faith, the Oneness of Humanity affirms the dignity and belonging of every person, while the Hindu idea of the world as one family extends regard beyond one's immediate community. In Islam, the teaching to desire for one's neighbour the good that one desires for oneself, together with Ihsan — Active Goodness — gives expression to the dignity, well-being and regard due to our neighbours.

The dignity and respect we expect for ourselves should therefore also be extended to others, including those whose beliefs, backgrounds and experiences may differ from our own.

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We respect our differences.

❖ *From coexistence to respectful engagement* ❖

We embrace our diversity as a source of our collective strength. We listen with respect and empathy. We choose words and actions that strengthen harmony.

Faith communities express respect for difference through the language of openness, empathy, mindfulness and restraint. The expression A Tapestry of Distinct Voices reflects the Sikh interpretation of how people may remain distinct while still belonging together. Jewish reflections emphasise respectful difference, while Buddhism speaks of Mindfulness and Compassion in how we relate and respond to others. The Zoroastrian emphasis on Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds encourages empathy, fairness and restraint in our interactions. Taoism contributes Humility and Compassion, inviting us to remain open to alternative perspectives and not assume that we are always right.

Good neighbourliness does not require differences to disappear. It asks us to remain open to one another and to stay in relationship even when our convictions differ.

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WE CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER.

❖ From empathy to active care ❖

We share in our neighbour's joys and we feel their pain. We respond with compassion when our neighbour is hurting or in need.

Faith communities express care through the language of compassion, active goodness, solidarity and mutual support. The Christian contribution speaks of Compassionate Action, while Islam expresses care through Ihsan — Active Goodness — towards one's neighbour. Jainism's Parasparopagraho Jivanam highlights mutual support and interdependence, while Buddhism emphasises compassion and loving-kindness. Taoism contributes Humility and Compassion, including approaching others without prejudgment, while Sikhism speaks of Solidarity — standing with others and coming forward to help when they are in difficulty.

Care moves neighbourliness from feeling to action. It means noticing when someone is in need and being prepared to respond.

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We are committed to living in harmony.

❖ *From good relations to shared responsibility* ❖

We strive to create the best model of harmony and cohesion for future generations. In times of hardship and challenge, we support one another and take shared responsibility for our common good.

Faith communities express a commitment to harmony through the language of solidarity, responsibility, cooperation and the common good. Sikhism speaks of Live in Harmony, Solidarity and the Wellbeing of all, while Jainism emphasises mutual support and interdependence. Zoroastrianism contributes Responsibility and Solidarity, including active participation in building a better community. Jewish reflections highlight civic cooperation, shared welfare and shared responsibility, while the Bahá'í contribution relates service and consultation to working together towards common goals.

Harmony is therefore not simply something we inherit or enjoy. It is something we continually build, sustain and strengthen together.

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When neighbourliness thrives, our society flourishes and our unity prevails. When we start as good and gracious neighbours, we end up with a cohesive, united and resilient Singapore.

The different faith traditions contribute their own language and perspectives to this journey. These terms arise from distinct traditions and retain their own meanings within those traditions. In the shared civic space, they help illuminate what it can mean to live as good and gracious neighbours.

Charter on Neighbourliness affirmed by the leaders of Singapore's ten faith communities on this 14th day of October 2026