

In Favor of Religious Freedom

People in all nations should work together to promote religious freedom, Church leaders have said repeatedly.

“Church members seek to create goodwill among people of all religious beliefs, political persuasions, and of every race,” said President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, at the John A. Widtsoe Religious Symposium at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, California, USA, in April 2015.

“The effort to throw off traditions of distrust and pettiness and truly see one another with new eyes—see each

other not as aliens or adversaries but as fellow travelers, brothers and sisters, and children of God—is one of the most challenging while at the same time most rewarding and ennobling experiences of our human existence,” President Uchtdorf said. His was one of several appeals for respect and understanding recently made by prophets and apostles.

“There should be no belligerence between religion and government,” Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said at the Court/Clergy Conference at Congregation B’nai Israel in Sacramento, California,

USA, in October 2015. “We all lose when an atmosphere of anger or hostility or contention prevails,” he said.

“Governments and their laws can provide the essential protections for believers and religious organizations and their activities,” he said, noting that religious principles, teachings, and organizations “can help create the conditions in which public laws and government institutions and their citizens can flourish,” so that all can “live together in happiness, harmony, and peace.”

Elder Oaks also spoke about religious freedom at a gathering in Argentina (see “News of the Church,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2016, 16).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles addressed the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Foreign Affairs in the House of Lords in London, England, in June 2015. “By appealing to one’s deepest values,” he said, “religions and religious organizations have a unique capacity to motivate people and, at the same time, cultivate attitudes of forgiveness, reconciliation, and a willingness to strive yet again for the ideal in their personal lives and in society.”

“Religious freedom is the cornerstone of peace in a world with many competing philosophies,” Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum



Meeting with a parliamentary group in London, UK, Elder Holland says religious people have power to motivate society.

*At a religious conference in California, USA, Elder Oaks
appeals for respect between church and state.*



*At a gathering of people of faith
in Brazil, Elder Christofferson says
“religious freedom is the cornerstone
of peace.”*



*President Uchtdorf and his wife,
Harriet, visit with religious lead-
ers in California, USA.*



*Elder Rasband counsels
students at Brigham Young
University to follow Christ’s
teaching to love as He loved.*



of the Twelve Apostles told an inter-faith group at the Brazil Mosque in São Paulo, Brazil, in April 2015. He spoke in Portuguese to an audience that included Muslims, Catholics, Adventists, Jews, Evangelicals, Latter-day Saints, native spiritualists, people of no particular faith, and others during an event celebrating the nation’s strong support of religious liberty. “May we pursue peace,” he said, “by working together to preserve and protect the freedom of all people to hold and manifest a religion or belief of their choice, whether individually or in community with others, at home or abroad, in public or private, and in worship, observance, practice, and teaching.”

“People of faith must be at the forefront in protecting religious

freedom—a freedom from which many other essential freedoms emanate,” said Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as he delivered the Annual Religious Liberty Lecture at the University of Notre Dame Australia in Sydney, Australia, in May 2015. “We must not only protect our ability to profess our own religion but also protect the right of each religion to administer its own doctrines and laws,” he said.

Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was serving as the Senior President of the Seventy when he spoke to students at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, USA, in September 2015.

“Some in your age group wonder why religious groups are involved in politics in the first place, and they

are often skeptical of the motives of religious people when they do so,” he said. The collective voice of groups who feel that religion should not play a role in political deliberation has grown louder in recent years, raising the “danger of creating another victimized class: people of faith, like you and me.”

Elder Rasband told the students that the world needs active involvement from their generation on this topic. “We need your generation’s natural understanding of compassion, respect, and fairness. We need your optimism and your determination to work through these complex social issues.” The answer, he said, is to begin with the Savior’s commandment to “love one another, as I have loved you” (John 13:34). ■

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