

## Solidarity with our Muslim Neighbors, Thousand Oaks, USA

On Christmas Day, 2015, Sister Mary Rebekah Kennedy and Sister Betty Mae Bienlein joined the Conejo Valley Interfaith Community to participate in a small gesture of solidarity with the Muslim community in Ventura County, California. This event was organized by the Conejo Valley Interfaith Community to promote inter-religious relationships.

About 75 non-Muslims stood in unity with the Muslim community supporting them, their values and faith and to denounce Islamophobia in all its forms. We gathered on the lawn in front of the Mosque with signs and banners, greeting the passersby with peace and solidarity.

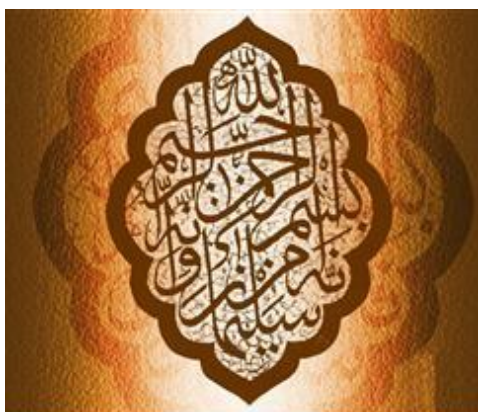
All were invited to join the Muslim community for the Friday Jummah prayer. We listened as Imam Ahmed Patel graciously thanked the visitors for supporting them especially on “the most holy day, Christmas Day, of the Christian religions.” He also spoke about the Muslim religion as one of peace and respect for others and that their religion was not one of extremes. “If the Quran says we prayer five times a day we do not pray six times a day.” Imam Patel also stated, “That for a Muslim, we are first human and then a Muslim.” As well left the gathering we were treated to donuts and many hugs and kisses filled with gratitude.

Imam Ahmed has posted the following statement on the Center’s website.

Islamic Center of Conejo Valley offers its deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of the victims in the tragic San Bernardino shooting and we pray for the quick recovery for those who were injured in this shooting. We share in the collective statement made by the US Council of Muslim Organizations ([USCMO](#)) attached below.

“The US Council of Muslim Organizations (USCMO), a coalition of leading national and local Muslim organizations, offers its sincere condolences to the families and loved ones of the victims in the San Bernardino shooting and pray for quick recovery of those who were injured. USCMO denounces this and every act of violence. This heinous act can never be justified under any circumstances. USCMO commends the first responders to this senseless attack for their swift and courageous handling of the situation.”

It was through a parent at La Reina High School, Reverend Julie Morris an Episcopalian Minister, that the sisters were invited to attend this event.





Christmas Day, we joined our Muslim brothers and sisters for their Friday Prayer Hour.



We support our local Muslim community and value and trust them and denounce Islamophobia in all its forms.