

## Across the Divide

Joe Ferullo | Aug. 3, 2009 NCR Today

Just as President Obama's speech at Notre Dame sought to reset the debate about abortion in America, so too his Cairo address attempted to shift relations between the Muslim and Christians worlds.

Big movements change in small steps, and one small step on the Chrsitian-Muslim divide has been taken here in Southern California.

Monday's [Los Angeles Times](#) [1]reports on the launch of a new interfaith educational program, called "Standing Together," devised by local Christian and Muslim leaders. The seven-session programs pulls together people hoping to learn about another culture and religion, and how different faiths can work in tandem on the big issues facing society.

The *Times* notes that, for decades, programs like this have produced soaring rhetoric but little real change. Studies show a good deal of ignorance remains about other faiths.

"We have a lot of work to do," said Fr. Alexi Smith, the ecumenical and interreligious affairs officer at the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, which is participating in the new Standing Together program.

Giving the astounding religious diversity of Southern California, interreligious efforts here have always been sincere, if not successful. If nothing else, Standing Together can be seen as renewing that long-standing ecumenical commitment at an especially promising time.

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[1] <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-beliefs3-2009aug03,0,2619089.story>